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ATHENÆUM.

MRS. ARMYTAGE;

OR,

FEMALE DOMINATION.

BY THE

AUTHORESS OF

"MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS."

SECOND EDITION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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FEMALE DOMINATION.

CHAPTER I.

A slumber did my spirit seal,
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

WORDSWORTH.

UNNATURAL must be the state of things in a family, where a child presumes not to give utterance to the grateful and affectionate feelings swelling in its bosom towards a parent. There must be a fault somewhere, perhaps on one side, more probably on both.

And such was the case with Arthur Armytage. Overjoyed to find himself honourably released from his difficulties, thankful to his mother for her aid, and, perhaps, scarcely less so for being spared the disagreeable task of

breaking the subject to her in person, he felt under the necessity of putting a constraint upon his expressions, in uttering his acknowledgments to Mrs. Armytage. He dared not be natural. He was afraid of saying too much, or too little; of implying something capable of giving umbrage to her susceptible temper. She was so little accustomed to forget the legislatress in the mother, that he dared not exhibit half so warmly as he could have wished the tenderness of a son.

His thanks, accordingly, though prompted by a thousand good and tender emotions, were formally and confusedly tendered; and Mrs. Armytage felt convinced that Arthur was more vexed at finding his indiscretions detected, than gratified to have been so gratuitously relieved. If not ungrateful, she had at least a right to consider him ungracious. She had expected more from him; and grew colder, and less communicative, in proportion to her disappointment.

The glowing terms, too, in which Marian,

with her usual frankness, depicted the pleasures of her visit to Spalding Court, vexed and displeased her. Her own career had been traced at so vast a distance from frivolous diversions and fashionable exploits, that she regarded them as an impertinent intrusion upon the business of life; and was of opinion, that they could interest and enliven only the silliest and most trivial of the human race. But when the actors of the drama were such people as Spaldings and Maclarens, her condemnation went much farther; levity became immodesty in her sight, and indiscretion, guilt.

Nor had she patience with the manœuvres, which, purporting only amusement to the giddy triflers by whom they were devised, went so far as to convert a respectable individual like Lomax into a blockhead and a laughing-stock, and to disappoint the expectation of her friends the Maranham family. Arthur and Marian described Leonidas and Penelope as likely to form a most ridiculous and entertaining couple; while Mrs. Armytage regarded

marriage as too sacred a thing to be rendered a matter of buffoonery.

But Arthur found serious causes of annoyance on his return to Holywell, to diminish the impression of his mother's ill humour. Thoroton was in arms against its member; Gumption, disappointed of his petty vengeance, more vindictive than ever. The Blue Boar grinned and showed its tusks; while a County paper, of no very reputable notoriety, diverted its readers, week after week, with anecdotes of the pride, pomposity, parsimony, and pretensions, of the Armytages of Holywell.

But this was not the worst. Once pointed out to his notice by the affectionate vigilance of his wife, Arthur could no longer blind himself to the alteration which a few short weeks had effected in the health and appearance of his sister. Sophia, gentle and uncomplaining as ever, was wan, thin, dispirited, the shadow of her former self. Her constitution, at all times delicate, had been strengthened in early life by the influence of regular habits and

country air; but now even these were losing their effect. Her brother began to apprehend that she might be becoming consumptive; and trembled lest the perpetual worry of her mother's temper should have exercised a fatal influence over his amiable and estimable sister.

The influence of disappointed hopes, of blighted affections, did not for a moment occur to his mind. Arthur's easy temper and happy temperament placed him beyond the range of such ascendency. His sensibility was much on a par with that of the rest of his sex. Thwarted in his early attachment to Lady Laura Greta, he had drowned his own sighs in the tantarara of the trumpets of the Life Guards, and converted himself, in the course of six months, from "the most miserable of men," into one of the gayest and wildest of flirting fellows about town; while his sudden fancy (it was little more) for Marian Baltimore had been too immediately crowned with success, to amend his insight into the griefs of an unhappy attachment.

Although, too, he had always conjectured that his friend Rainsford entertained an affection for Sophia, which Sophia at some future moment would probably requite with her hand, he had not been made the confidant of either, —had no notion of the extent of their regard, —and when he heard it vaguely rumoured that Edgar was to marry the daughter of Lady Emily Romer, flattered himself he had been hitherto under a mistake, and rejoiced that his friend Greta had thus a better chance of becoming his brother-in-law: for Arthur liked Rainsford much, but Greta, more. Greta occupied a position more consonant with his own; he had of late years seen more of him,— was his country neighbour, his brother Whig. He could not desire a happier alliance for Sophia. But, alas! her present enfeebled condition rendered all these prospects precarious; and though he did not dare accost her with such affectionate inquiries as might alarm her respecting her own state of health, Arthur could no longer forbear ad-

verting to the subject in conversation with his mother.

To his surprise, Mrs. Armytage was unconvincible; and seemed even angry at any allusion to Sophia's indisposition. Some people have no better mode than sullenness of evincing sorrow. She attributed her daughter's weakness to the heat of the weather; and at length silenced him by an assertion he had not the means of controverting, that Sophia had been bitterly afflicted by the recent mortification entailed on the family by his own indiscretion. It is true, the first striking change in her appearance dated from the very epoch of Gumption's nefarious exposure of the pecuniary distresses of Arthur Armytage.

Dr. Grant, meanwhile, true to his promise, confided not a word to Sophia's brother touching the true cause of her despondency, for he knew it was now too late for brotherly interference to prove available; and in reply to Arthur's questions and expressions of uneasiness on her account, the good man simply

recommended change of air and scene. But Mrs. Armytage, in spite of all their representations, remained immovable from Holywell; and Arthur, who would have made any sacrifice, any exertion, for his sister, had it not in his power to afford her the desired restorative. He thought it hard, and it was hard, that, possessed of twelve thousand a year, he could not command the power of renovating the bloom of poor Sophia's cheeks or the cheerfulness of her smiles.

The lady of Holywell (if indeed blind to the necessities of the case) had some grounds to plead against the possibility of quitting home. Doncaster races were approaching; and Doncaster races confer the same sort of responsibility on all mansions within twenty miles distance, which a coronation entails on the houses in Palace Yard. For many months before, invitations and engagements are made, which then to shirk were then to be most base; and from time immemorial a noble spirit of hospitality had at such epochs opened the

gates, slaughtered the venison, and drained the claret binns of Holywell. Estranged from London and its splendours, that annual holiday seemed sufficiently to enliven the sober year of Mrs. Armytage.

During the week preceding the races, the gathering, in all the neighbourhood round, is as the swarming of a hundred hives; from east, west, north, and south, kinsfolk and friends turn their thoughts and their travelling carriages towards Doncaster. Houses are made to stretch for the occasion; accommodations otherwise noted unavailable become effective for a time; no room is too small, no bed too simple for a guest. "Come, and we will do our best for you; the house is quite full, but you will be better with us than at an inn," is a welcome sound to such stragglers as have not had the good fortune to be booked for an earlier invitation.

But even such an invitation as this, Arthur had it not in his power to afford. He was aware that, on the present occasion, his mother

expected the arrival of Sir John and Lady Maudsley, and their three daughters, prudently bent on proving to their wealthy kinswoman their magnanimity of temper, superior to resenting her daughter's rejection of their son. His father's distant relative, Lord Armytage, had long been in the habit of bringing his lady to pass an annual week at Holywell, on occasion of the races; and in addition to these two large detachments, several old friends of Mrs. Armytage, including General and Mr. Devereux, Sir Charles and Lady Chartley, and some distant cousins from the county of Notts, were positively engaged to be of the Holywell party.

Yet Arthur had good reason to be certain that, notwithstanding the serious repulse experienced by Jack Baltimore in his intrusion at Holywell, the Dyke Robseys were in full expectation of receiving an invitation from him for the races ;—the Robseys, who had so generously bestowed on Marian the whole of her little fortune — who naturally

regarded themselves as the origin of her brilliant marriage; and whose wedding gifts had been the only ones tendered him at that inauspicious epoch. Every individual of their Pimento circle in Portland Place had no doubt observed to them, "Ah! you are going to the North this year,—to Scarborough, to Doncaster?—To meet your married niece of course? Holywell Park, I fancy, is in the neighbourhood of Doncaster?—How very pleasant! how very convenient!" Yet no invitation, or hint of invitation, had been despatched.

But affairs were now becoming desperate. The Robseys had actually quitted London, were actually spar-gathering at Matlock; and unless there were any hope of their being lost in Poole's Hole, or engulphed in the Eldin Mine, no chance of escape for Arthur! Their letters to Marian implied, that they should of course be asked to sleep a few nights at Holywell Park, yet Marian could just as readily have lodged them at Windsor Castle!

She would have far sooner entreated shelter for her uncle and aunt of the Duchess of Spalding, than of her awful mother-in-law.

At last, Arthur, conscious of the extremity of the case, took courage; not to address Mrs. Armytage on the subject—of the impossibility of such a measure he felt hourly more conscious; but to appeal to the Robseys themselves. He wrote, in short, in a tone of as much unconcern as he could assume, expressing his regret that, for many months past, his mother had formed such engagements as to debar him from the pleasure he should have had in offering them accommodations at Holywell; and to inform them that, unless they empowered him to take immediate precautions, they would not find a room or bed undisposed of in the neighbourhood. And such, he heartily hoped, might prove the case; still, it was his duty to apprize them of the hazard; while in softening phrase, he expressed his hopes that, at some *future* time, they would accompany him to the races from Holywell.

Not a word in reply!

At Arthur's suggestion, Marian wrote again, and nearly in the same terms, but with those more conciliatory explanations which flow spontaneously from a woman's pen. Still no answer! The kind-hearted niece, recalling to mind the physical infirmities of poor old little Jacob, began almost to fear that her good uncle might have over-exerted himself among the wonders of the Peak, and fallen a martyr to the picturesque; while Arthur had an uneasy apprehension that they were only affronted, and that it was among the possibilities of things, Jack Baltimore's ex-jockey friend Lightweight might have been induced to bestow upon them the hospitality so pitifully withheld at Holywell. And this would, indeed, be a consummation! Under what auspices for a Mrs. Arthur Armytage to present herself to the fastidious inquisition of Yorkshire! And what would he not have hazarded, rather than encounter such an ordeal?

Any thing, perhaps, but the indignation of his mother! To quit home on the eve of the races, when so extensive a family reunion was about to be collected under her roof, would be an offence far direr in its results than any he had hitherto perpetrated; — Arthur reluctantly submitted himself to an encounter with the tug of war.

CHAPTER II.

By our present mode of education we are forcibly warped from the bias of nature, until even our thinking faculty is diverted into an unnatural channel. We are changed into creatures of art and affectation; our perception is abused; our senses perverted; our minds lose their force and flavour—till the soul sinks into a kind of idiotism, and is diverted by toys and baubles, enlivened by a quick succession of trivial objects that glisten, glance, and dance before the eye—like an infant kept awake and inspirited by the sound of a rattle.

SMOLLETT.

ONE available resource remained for him against the contemplation of these impending ills, no less than of Sophia's pale and cheerless countenance—in that all-engrossing purpose of masculine existence—the sports of the field. It was September. The Holywell preserves were the best in that part of the country. No vacation synod of over-tasked ministers, or faction of a disbanded administration, gathered annually in the halls of Mrs. Armytage, to plan, project, cabal, outwit,—as

in those of the Duchess of Spalding, on pretence of *battues,* calculated to decimate her game, and form a screen to far wider devastations. She had what is called "excellent shooting" to bestow upon her friends and guests; but not a coney,—not so much as the range of a turnip-field,—to offer as a bait to those wandering dervises of the great world, who bestow their tediousness on country-houses, in proportion to the merits of the sport afforded, or the reputation of the cook provided and providing.

Still, there is something cheerless in solitary sports. To traverse a mountain moor where all is wild and strange, with no other society than the uninterpretable Highlander toiling after you in vain, may be an exciting thing; but to wander over the same "farmy fields" you have wandered over from childhood, with none but Dick Martindale the keeper to applaud your exploits, is, in the sequel, wearisome enough. Greta and his two friends still loitered in Perthshire; not

one of the Spalding family could Arthur presume to invite; the society of Wemmersley, their only sporting neighbour, was worse than none; and, unless he could have persuaded old Dr. Maranham to bear him company, Dick Martindale was fated to be the Patroclus of our Achilles.

But all this compulsive solitude was advantageous to him. Affording that leisure for reflection which had hitherto been wanting, it rendered him eager to loiter for an hour or two at the vicarage on his return towards Holywell, whenever Dr. Grant found respite from his pastoral and paternal duties to bestow his time on one whose enlightenment might tend at some future time to the enlightenment of the country.

There was something in the very presence of Dr. Grant, even when unengaged in bestowing spiritual exhortation or classical instruction, which exercised the happiest influence over the mind of Arthur. Arthur was discontented with his lot; accounted himself

a slave—a victim. Yet here was a man, immeasurably his superior in understanding, acquirements, virtue,—resigned to "shine humbly in his sphere and be content;"—desiring riches as a means of good to others, yet patient in poverty; conscious of power to enlighten the world, to distinguish himself as a preacher, to exalt himself as a reformer, yet satisfied to remain obscure, doing good after his generation; nay, more than satisfied—happy, and exulting in the opportunities afforded. Although constantly thwarted in his views by the opposition of Mrs. Armytage, he felt that few pastors would have exercised over her perverseness so much authority as himself; and that few pastors are fortunate in a patroness of so much moral excellence, or such well-motived liberality towards the poor. He thought of Spaldington, and its rich rector the dean, and its rich rector the dean's protectress, the duchess,—and gloried in his humble lot. He looked round upon his fair children—the memento of his wedded hap-

piness—and blessed the name of Mrs. Armytage; he looked upward to the bright sky, where his past labours and past affections were to be crowned, and blessed the name of the Almighty! And what spectacle more exalted, more instructive, than a man of lofty powers of mind and aspiring nature, subdued to philosophy by the influence of religion?

From the contemplation of such an example, Arthur often turned his steps more lightly towards Holywell, remembering that *he* had a living wife to love and cherish him, —a child born in the sunshine of prosperity— a position enabling him to achieve distinction, and contribute to the happiness and amelioration of his fellow-creatures; that *he* walked in no narrow circle of limitation, unless the circumscription of his own passions, his own frailties. Armed against himself by the lesson, he would mount his horse and ride cheerfully into Thornton, confront with firmness the insolence of its petty cabal, disconcert the manœuvres of Gumption and his

confraternity, confer with his friend the Mayor, consult the interests of the manufacturing population, acquaint himself with the necessities, the projects, of his constituents, and form views of his own for the reconcilement of their jarring claims. The counsels of the right-minded Lord Rotherham were also of material service to him; and if Marian sometimes suspected that he made them a pretext for too frequent visits to Greta Castle, she was now too uneasy on Sophy's account to indulge as formerly in the personal griefs of idle jealousy.

It was on the eve of the arrival of Lord and Lady Armytage, and Sir John Maudsley and his family were already established at Holywell preparatory to the races, that Wemmersley,—who had no other occupation than to prowl like a stray cat from house to house in the neighbourhood, to get up petty fights, execute petty depredations, and render himself a universal nuisance,—walked into the drawing-room at Holywell to inquire of Sir John

after his charming friend Mr. Reginald Maudsley (whom he knew to be sulking on a tour in Carniola), to inform Lady Maudsley that there were several cases of smallpox in the neighbourhood (which he knew to be convalescent), and to predict, for the gratification of the whole party, that they would certainly have rain for the races,—"Every fifth Doncaster being invariably rainy, and the last four having been fine as Midsummer."

"I was over at Doncaster yesterday," said he. "Not being so fortunate as my friend Mrs. Armytage in a double set of horses, the journey is more of an affair to us; and I always get a *pied-à-terre* for the benefit of our party."

"His friend, Mrs. Armytage," did not think it necessary to apprise him that her widely-extended connexion in the town and neighbourhood pre-assured her the use of half-a-dozen *pied-à-terres,* but suffered him to proceed with his malignations.

"I was glad to find that our races are likely

to be remarkably full, as well as remarkably good," said he; "though bored enough that not a room was to be had but a dark hole over a confectioner's, smelling of raspberry jam and queencakes, at the rate of three guineas a day. I ought, however, to have congratulated myself that it was no worse; for it seems we Yorkshire squires"—(Mrs. Armytage, with ruffled feathers, longed to remind him that he had been born in his father's villa at Hornsey)—"are to be brought out this year. Fate has brought down in judgment upon us a tribe of graminivorous nigger-drivers, enough to spread the yellow fever through the country. All the best rooms at the New Angel are engaged for a Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Robsey,—all the best stabling engaged for a Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Robsey,—the best places in the Stand for a Mr. and Mrs. Dyke Robsey;—and when I saw a fine lively turtle arrive by the mail, and tried to make interest at the Rockingham Arms for a few quarts for our party at Mill Hill,—not so much as a fin undisposed

of!—all belonging to Monsieur le Marquis de Carabas, this said Mr. Dyke Robsey."

"And who is Mr. Dyke Robsey?" inquired poor Lady Maudsley, a perpetual questioner about nothings,—a stereotyped note of interrogation.

"There is a little spare, dwarfed, priggish individual of that name in the House," replied Sir John; "member for Perjureham, if my memory serves me;" and out came the Peacock's Repository, which fulfilled to *his* needs all purposes of rhetoric or science, as containing an authentic list of baronets and members of parliament. "Exactly,—'Jacob Dyke Robsey, Portland Place, London (no country seat, apparently), member for Perjureham.' Ay,—I recollect him,—I used to sit near him, or I never should have heard the dozen words of speech, which regularly a dozen times in the course of the session he intended should have become audible to the House.—'Mister Speaker, I, who hold myself to be the unflinching champion of railroads and radical

reform,'—when cries of 'Question,' or a chorus of coughs, used invariably to deprive posterity of the peroration. Poor little fellow! he was pigmy enough to have been a grandee of Spain."

"Mr. Dyke Robsey is my very near relation," interrupted Mrs. Arthur Armytage; and, to Sophia's satisfaction, in a firmer voice, and with a calmer manner, than she had even expected to hear her sister-in-law assume on so trying an occasion.

"Ten thousand thousand pardons, my dear madam," cried Sir John, not sorry, perhaps, to have been the means of inflicting mortification indirectly on Mrs. Armytage, who, at various times, had been the means of inflicting so much and so directly on himself; "I was not at all aware,—I could not be expected to know. I really think it will be a vastly convenient thing when 'Burke's Commoners' shall be completed, like the Baronetage and Peerage, so as to make one better acquainted with alliances and intermarriages,

—at least in one's own family, and in a certain rank of life."

"Even as it is," replied Marian, to Sophia's still greater amazement, "circumstances might have made you aware of my connexion with Mr. Robsey; his wife and my mother being alike daughters of one of the earlier Irish Baronets, Sir Emilius O'Moran."

"But after all, *who* reads or cares for such things!" cried Wemmersley, provoked to see her extricate herself so well from the pit he had prepared for her. "It was only the other day that I heard Lord Rotherham's sister, Lady Cardington, coolly inquire of Di Maranham after her niece Miss Devonport!—'I have no niece, Madam; Miss Devonport is no relation of the family.'—'Pray excuse me,' drawled Lady Cardington, 'I always fancied than an elder sister of yours had married a Mr. Devonport, and died in the West Indies.'—'There is no occasion for any exercise of the *fancy* with regard to such a family as ours!' retorted Di. 'The Ba-

ronetage might have afforded your ladyship proof in point.'—'Ah! very true!' again drawled Lady Cardington; 'I *have* a Baronetage and Peerage for the use of my porter, in Grosvenor Square; but, to say the truth, I never opened one in my life.'"

Wemmersley's mimicry of the short, crabbed voice of the Yorkshire 'squiress, and the silver drawl of the dowager of May Fair, was to the life; yet nobody laughed. The Maudsleys were affronted, and Mrs. Armytage, angry. "I had not supposed," said she, "that my friend Lord Rotherham could have so ridiculous a sister."

"And did you learn at Doncaster, Mr. Wemmersley," inquired poor Sophia, in her now hollow voice, "*whether* the races were likely to be brilliantly attended this year?"

"Oh! you know there is always prodigious exaggeration of the strength of forces, on the eve of a battle. But we *shall* have, of course, our usual allowance of county notabilities,—the Duke, and the Wentworth family, with their

thirty (how many is it?) outriders a-piece. The Duke of Wetherby, too, comes in state, and, to Lady Honoria's surprise, in a state of single-blessedness; while the Spaldings will have a suite of twenty carriages, including those of my excellent relative, Mr. Leonidas Lomax, whom report asserts to be on the eve of marriage with the Duke of Spalding's niece."

"*That* you must consider a match of your own making, Mr. Wemmersley," observed Mr. Arthur; "since *you* were the means of introducing him to the family."

"Yes; but I had then a higher opinion of the family than to suppose they would condescend to barter a twig of their genealogical tree against even a million of dollars, amassed by drysalting and treacle-boiling!" cried Wemmersley, with all the indiscretion of rage. "I have had enough of them! Last week that Frenchified jackanapes, Lord Wyndham, wrote me coolly word, 'Dear Sir,'—he was coming over to sleep at Mill-Hill; and I,

still more coolly, wrote back word that my house was full."

"You should never have allowed them to take such liberties with you," said Marian, to whom this latter piece of information had been significantly addressed by Wemmersley; "the Duke of Spalding himself would not have presumed so far at Holywell."

"But to return to the races, Miss Armytage," resumed Wemmersley, to cover his disconcertment—"We are to have at Greta Castle, as usual, a vast gathering of the Partlet family,—all Lord Rotherham's married sisters, and all Lady Rotherham's married brothers, and all the sons and daughters of all the tribe; besides the party of young Moormen, who will arrive this evening from Glenvaclach. But the best set, as usual, will be at Sir Edward Longbond's."

"And who is Sir Edward Longbond?" inquired old Maudsley, smelling a baronet.

"No one we should have ever heard of,"

replied Wemmersley, "if he had not happened to purchase that remarkably pretty place, with the fine plantations, close to Doncaster race-course. But by managing to turn its eligibilities to account, he has provided splendidly for his whole family. George Robins, when he advertised the estate, instead of describing the substantial mansion, fine sheets of water, pineries, and ice-houses, 'the whole contiguous to the far-famed race-course of Doncaster, and commanding a view of the Stand,' ought to have defined it as 'a pair of colours in the Guards, a stall at Winchester, an attaché-ship at Munich, all lying in a ring-fence within view of the St. Leger.'"

"I have not the honour of understanding you, Sir," said Sir John; who, regarding Wemmersley's volubility as unparliamentary and plebeian, chose to make him rise to explain.

"I mean," cried Wemmersley, very much elated by his own wit, "that Sir Edward, by contriving to make his house available for the

races year after year, to my lord the First Lord of the Treasury, my lords of the Home and Foreign Departments, with other cabinet et-cetera (being unquestionably the most convenient for the purpose of any in the neighbourhood), has provided for half-a-dozen younger sons. For the hundred or so per annum he expends on his race parties, the revenue finds compound interest to the amount of between three and four thousand a year."

"Not altogether a liberal calculation," said Sir John, jealous of the honour of a Sir Edward: "in all probability his family interest and connexions—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Wemmersley; "you lie under a very natural mistake. But the object of your vindication is not so much as a baronet by descent. He is indebted even for that small distinction to Maplewood Lodge. He arrived in Yorkshire, Edward Longbond, Esq., and (I grieve to mention it) from some retired-solicitor or small-mercantile neighbourhood,—such as Welbeck Street or

Devonshire Place,—and rose to Sir Edward-ship and a deputy lieutenancy in the course of the first three Doncasters."

"You ought to add," said Mrs. Armytage, with dignity, "that Sir Edward Longbond has not attained, nor ever will, any permanent footing in the society of Yorkshire."

"I do not imagine that he ever sought it," said Wemmersley, rising to take leave. "He prudently invested his civilities, as he had been investing his Bank stock, where they were likely to return him the highest rate of interest. The smallest Under Secretary of State was worth more to Longbond than the highest Yorkshire high-mightiness. Good morning, my dear Madam; Lady Maudsley, your most obedient;" and, with a comprehensive bow to the younger ladies, away went Wemmersley, delighted to have inflicted pin's-point wounds on the pride of every person present."

But there was one to whom, while meaning to give pain, he had imparted unlimited plea-

sure. Marian, who for a week past had been trembling lest she was fated to forego the long-promised pleasures of her Scarborough excursion, and even seriously apprehensive that some mischief had befallen some member of her family, was now wrapt up in measureless content. The Robseys, in whom she could see nothing to be ashamed of,—nothing but what was honourable and gratifying as a family connexion, were actually coming. Instead of fretting over the inhospitality of Holywell, they had secured the best accommodations,—had outbid princes, archbishops, and peers of the realm,—and established themselves, to their entire satisfaction, unhurt by the contumely of a Mrs. Armytage. Her father, she had long known, would certainly accompany his friend Tom Warley, who had a permanent lodging in the town. But now the whole family was secured to her. Who knows,—perhaps even her dear, good mother would be of the party? Her eyes sparkled,—her colour rose. Self-absorbed, she heard not even Lady

Maudsley's polite inquiries after the teething of her baby. She heard no arrival, no announcement of visitors; nay, was obliged to be addressed twice by Mrs. Armytage ere she turned to execute her formal introduction-curtsey to Lord and Lady Armytage,—personages whom, as distant connexions of her late husband, the lady of Holywell always treated with deference; but to whom, as in noble and aristocratic connexions, her own superiors in condition, she did not fail to temper her civilities with formality and hauteur. Her reception of two of the easiest and best-natured people in England was as measured and ceremonious as that of some plenipo. of the Landgrave of Saxe Kleinigstein doing the honours of his saloon to the resident of the Duke of Hesse-Rothenburg-Fisigbuttel.

CHAPTER III.

She dressed herself in silk attire,
Her merry men all in green;
And in every borough that she rode through,
They took her to be some queen.

OLD BALLAD.

ARTHUR returned in the highest spirits that day from shooting. He had been lucky in his sport; had seen Wemmersley at a distance, and rejoiced in having escaped his visit; and experienced all the elation, natural at his age, in the prospect of a pleasant party, to join the brilliant county-meeting of the morrow. For Yorkshire is an especially patriotic shire; "steeped to saturation," as Lord Wyndham Spalding was apt to observe, "in that most narrow-spirited of all spirits—*l'esprit de province.*"

But when Marian rushed into his dressing-room to meet him, radiant with smiles,—smiles

not unmoistened by tears of joy,—to say that "They were *all* coming! certainly coming! her uncle and aunt; her dear papa, and, perhaps, all the rest of the family!" the mercury ebbed in the tube, and Arthur's spirit became depressed to zero.

To do him justice, it was not now of his mother he was afraid, but of *them*. Offended, as they doubtless were, by the gracelessness so little originating with himself, how should he avoid the explosion of family wrath, which could not occur more inopportunely than in a race-stand, or county ball-room? He knew both Jack Baltimore and his sister-in-law to be wholly unsubmitted to the conventionalisms of society; the one from despising, the other from misapprehending them. He was satisfied that they would enlarge long and loudly on their chapter of grievances, at some uncomfortable moment, to gall the tender pride of his mother, excite the lofty sneers of the Maudsleys, or, still worse, provoke against himself the ill-opinion of his more rational

relative, Lord Armytage; a man with whom he was proud to keep up that good-will of distant kinsmanship, which exists between the wealthy 'squire, ambitious to be no *more* than esquire, and the noble lord, who would be sorry to exchange his coronet for the finest of estates. Lord Armytage had been long in office, and Arthur, the son of his cousin Arthur, had asked no favour of him: the Holywell interest returned a member to parliament, and the minister had never sought to gain his vote. There was self-respect, and consequently, mutual respect between the families.

And now there was every probability that his Right Honourable cousin would hear him upbraided by a jockey-looking man, of port-and-porter complexion, with the mean insolence of pride; or his pretty little wife reproached, by a gorgeous virago, with benefits received and benefits forgot! How disparagingly would Lord and Lady Armytage thenceforward think of them, for having proved un-

grateful to obscure relations, too undistinguished to become invited guests at Holywell!

"My dear Marian," cried Arthur, in despair, "have you set your heart on going to-morrow to the races? They are never more than moderately good the first day;—my mother seldom goes the first day,—only this year, the Maudsleys and Devereuxes seem inclined to make the utmost of an opportunity of amusing themselves, and she is under the necessity of obliging them."

"Indeed *I have*," replied Marian, somewhat startled; "you I know I am quite indifferent to the goodness of the races. *I* should not know Eclipse from Plenipo; and as to the company, whether there are three dukes and six, (I mean ducal carriages,) or only one, or even none, what difference can it make to me? But remember, dearest, I have not seen papa these sixteen months; no! not since our wedding-day; and now I am certain of aunt and uncle Robsey's coming,—I—"

Arthur groaned. "But surely one day

makes no great difference, after the sixteen months' absence?" said he; "and if you could persuade yourself to remain at home to-morrow with poor Sophy, (who, I fear, would find her three following days of perfect solitude more oppressive than she anticipates,) you would enjoy yourself doubly on the following day, from the thought of having done a kind action by my sister."

"Indeed I should!" cried Marian, with unsuspecting frankness, little dreaming that her husband, conscious of her guilelessness—her total want of tact—was intent only on assuming to himself exclusively the management of the first interview with her family; "and if Sophia will accept my company (which I almost doubt, for she is now so fond of being alone), I will most willingly stay with her. I am ashamed to say, I never thought of it! But as dear Sophy makes so little of her own indisposition, and seems so unwilling to have it noticed before Mrs. Armytage, I shall mention nothing about my intentions till to-mor-

row, as they are all setting off. It is settled, I believe, that your mother takes in *her* carriage Lady Armytage, Lady Maudsley, and Mrs. Devereux; Lady Chartley and two of the Maudsley girls were to go with *me* in the barouche; *you* can supply my place. For form's sake, there must be some member of the family with them."

Arthur, who was to have accompanied Lord Armytage and Sir Charles Chartley in the britschka of the former, at an earlier hour, scarcely relished the idea of relinquishing a pleasant party, for a place in the grand family procession; but after Marian's generous self abnegation,—how to raise objections? He could only accede, thank her cordially for her compliance, and tell her—and honestly and sincerely—that never had he seen her look so pretty. Flattery, or it might be approbation, from Arthur naturally increased her bloom and brilliancy, so that when she entered the room before dinner, where the large Holywell party was assembled, Mrs. Armytage's guests

were unanimously of opinion, that if her son had not done justice to his pedigree in his choice of a wife, he had ample excuse in the personal charms and gentle modest demeanour of Mrs. Arthur Armytage.

And, thus re-assured in his apprehensions for the following day, the dinner went off pleasantly enough to Arthur. On state occasions like the present, he made it a point to cede his usual post at table to Dr. Grant, who occupied a sort of chaplain's post in the family, and never did his mother appear to such advantage as when presiding over the pomp of such an entertainment; proud of her well-ordered hospitality, her well-selected society, yet never suffering the magnificence of her gilt plate or the cares of the buffet to interfere with her share in conversation. Eminently well informed on all topics which interest the abler class of country gentlemen, Mrs. Armytage could argue with Lord Armytage, — with Chartley, Devereux, or Maudsley, on points which their own wives seldom heard mentioned

without a yawn,—and was familiar with the leading political periodicals and pamphlets of the day, and indebted to Dr. Grant for a clearer insight into the views of each; she knew all, in short, which an extensive landed proprietor ought to know; and displayed her knowledge, not for the sake of display, but for the promotion of conversation. Arthur, who had only recently devoted *his* attention to such studies, felt that her views were clearer, her judgment more accurately based than his own; and was naturally proud of the respect paid to her opinion by every man present,—three of whom were senators, and one *more* than a senator—an enlightened and upright divine.

The following day, in spite of the predictions of Wemmersley, whose predictions had been *mere* spite, glowed with a fine autumnal sunshine; and the substantially furnished breakfast-table was surrounded by cheerful faces and contented guests. Race-cards were handed from one to another; the odds

discussed; the names of "Marcellina" and "Tomboy" had honourable mention; a guinea raffle was made up for the ladies, and the youngest Miss Maudsley declared herself enchanted to have drawn "Rhodacantha," because "it was such a very pretty name." Even the prospect of the sixteen miles before them, alarmed no one. The road was a noble one,—the post-horses excellent. Those of Mrs. Armytage were in waiting some four miles from Doncaster; and the worthy family whose house in the town was annually placed at her disposal, not only entertained them all at dinner, but provided beds for such of the party as were unable, or unwilling, to return to Holywell at night. Nothing could be better arranged.

Yet Marian listened to their mutual gratulations with a cheerful countenance. She was above all things anxious that Arthur should entertain no suspicion of her feelings of disappointment, to embitter his pleasures of the day. Sophia, unable now to quit her room

for breakfast, knew nothing of plans with which she would certainly have interfered; and when Mrs. Armytage and her detachment had driven from the door, her daughter-in-law pleaded a graceful apology to Lady Chartley and the Miss Maudsleys, her sisters. Arthur took her place in the barouche: and, with a smiling lip but tearful eyes, Marian stood watching from the breakfast-room window the gradual dispersion of the dust raised by the progress of the cavalcade through the park.

Scarcely, however, had the last brown shade vanished among the intermingling verdure of elms and oaks, when she was singing in her nursery, and giving orders for the preparations she was now sure would be necessary for her trip to Scarborough; promising her little unconscious, round-eyed baby, how loved and how caressed it should be; and content to think that Arthur had her notes to Papa and Aunt Robsey safe in his pocket; that he would soon be shaking hands with one, and shaken hands with by the other! By noon, too, she had

established herself in Sophia's dressing-room, with her work-box and her book; prepared to talk or be silent, as the invalid might require. But there was only one point on which Miss Armytage felt just then desirous of conversation;—to know who had practised on the easy nature of Marian, so far as to dissuade her from going to the races, concerning which, the preceding day, she had indulged in such rapturous anticipations; and this Sophia had not courage to ask. Sophia strongly suspected that her sister-in-law had been unfairly dealt with.

For her own part she would have willingly dispensed with Marian's company. Amply as Sophia rendered justice to her merits, and dearly, in fact, as she loved her, Marian was not in her confidence. Miss Armytage was aware that to confide to her was to confide to Arthur,—the last person she desired to acquaint with the real origin of her illness. Dr. Grant was her only friend and comforter; for although, from the day on which he had tenderly and cautiously showed her an announcement in the

newspapers, of "Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Rainsford's departure from London on a bridal tour to Italy," the name had never been mentioned between them; he knew all that was passing in her mind, and, thus informed, avoided all inquiries and all subjects capable of giving her pain. He believed her, and with justice, to be too good, too delicate, to dwell upon reminiscences of the attachment of a man by whom she had been forsaken for another; but he also feared that the shaft thus resolutely drawn forth from her bosom, had left an agonizing, if not a fatal wound behind.

To assuage these sufferings by the soothing power of religion,—the strengthening power of reason,—was his earnest care. So often as he could seek her society without attracting the notice of Mrs. Armytage, the good pastor was by her side, reminding her of her responsibility for the many good and glorious gifts bestowed upon her, exhorting her to be well, to be cheerful, to be happy. And Sophia, to her utmost, obeyed his injunctions; she was often cheerful,

never *well*. "My dear Doctor," she would say, in answer to his reprehensions, "I am doing my best, believe me, I am doing my best. But we hear of the difficulty which people who ascend mountains are said to experience in breathing; just so, I find it difficult to live. The moral air I breathe is too cold and insufficient for my existence."

Assured that her venerable friend would devote part of every race day to her society, Miss Armytage had hoped to be alone with him. She had so many doubts to solve, so many apprehensions to relieve, so many spots of darkness to remove, such as suddenly appear among the shadows of a closing day, or closing existence. To the children of this world, she felt it irrelevant to talk of such things; to the father of a flock, she might unburthen all her misgivings! But between two perfectly ingenuous persons, explanations are not difficult; and when the good pastor of Holywell made his appearance, she had only to say "Dear Marian, I wish to have some conversation with

Dr. Grant," to be left to the discussions she desired.

Meanwhile, thoughtless of the sick, and careless of the sorry, the gay cavalcade made its way through a succession of cheerful villages, at the wicket gates of whose white cottages many an humble curtsey was dropped to the "grand coaches of Madam Armytage;" while the labourer uncovered his head as he recognized the Holywell liveries, and the urchins dabbling in the pool sent up a shout in her honour. At length they reached the spot where two fine sets of horses, held by the Holywell outriders, awaited the two first carriages, and fresh posters the remainder; and, proud of her well-appointed equipage and well-selected party, Mrs. Armytage prepared to make her triumphal entry upon the race-course; conscious that she exhibited neither horse nor menial more or less than her father the Squire had done before her,—that there was no vulgar competition with the Duke of this, or Earl of that,—that she was only doing becoming honour to Yorkshire, to Doncaster, and to Holywell.

But if Mr. Wemmersley awaited in his new barouche, with hatred and malevolence, the coming of the party, there was *one* person on the course watching with eager and affectionate anxiety for a glimpse of the well-known liveries of green and gold; a man with a heavy book, the responsibilities of which, on settling day, would probably leave him in difficulties for the remainder of the year; a man whose sleeve was plucked for counsel by many a turf-bitten lord; whose bets were noted and backed by many a worthy in rusty buckskins, mahogany-topped boots, and a frock of well-worn camlet; and who, amid all his temporary importance, all his permanent distresses, felt himself sufficiently compensated for a twelvemonths' estrangement from his child, by the happy prospects of the moment. The expectation of seeing his pretty Marian take her place among the Yorkshire highflyers, with such appurtenances and means to boot, such cattle, such a coachman in such a wig (none of the London chaps know how to wear a wig!), and of finding her joyous and affectionate as

ever, was almost too much of happiness for Jack Baltimore!

The moment he descried the party, Jack touched the sides of the incomparable pony he bestrode,—a pony which Landseer might have delighted to paint, or Lady Dacre to model, —and trotted off to the first carriage, where waved the feathers of the Ladies Armytage and Maudsley, and gleamed the sober, white satin bonnet of Mrs. Armytage. But no Marian; the fourth lady was a very pretty Mrs. Devereux, but not the pretty one he wanted. He passed on to the second carriage, where Lady Chartley and her sisters cast admiring glances on his knowing pony, although he had no admiring glances to bestow in return, for Marian was not there. The other carriages of the suite were empty; the gentlemen of the party having already mounted their horses to ride to the stand.

"Pray can you inform me, my hearty, where I am likely to find Mrs. Arthur Armytage," cried Jack, to a servant who was lounging

behind the britschka of Lord Armytage. But his "hearty," who was booking a bet he had just made with Sir Charles Chartley's valet, turned a deaf ear to the inquiry.

"I say, where the devil is Mrs. Arthur Armytage?" cried Jack in a louder key, roughly detaining a man in the Holywell livery, who was climbing to the box of the barouche.

"In oan or t'oother them carriages, Ize naw shure," exclaimed canny Yorkshire, certain that he had assisted in the embarkation of eight female passengers in the two; but conceiving little difference between a lady in a blue gown and a lady in a lilac pelisse.

Jack looked again, and began to swear, believing that the man was trying "to sell him a bargain." "And where the devil then is your master?" persisted he. But Yorkshire was sulky and would not answer; and it was the post-boy, who, in deference to the clever bit of a thing on which the "obstropolous gemman" was mounted, condescended to reply that "Mr.

Harmitage was off to the stond with my Lord and t'other gemman."

"My Lord and t'other gentleman," retorted Jack with bitterness, as he trotted off at speed. "Lords enough, no doubt; let alone the gentlemen. But where's his wife? where's my girl?"

Intimately versed in the localities of that field of forty thousand footsteps, Jack soon reached the spot where Arthur and his friends stood awaiting the slow arrival of the Holywell carriages; a group such as may be seen on all race courses; looking with eager eyes, speaking with eager voices, listening with eager ears: all talking at once,—all half-angry, and whole-disputatious;—affording proof in point, that scarcely a modern Englishman but is born with the instincts of a horse-jockey.

"Armytage!—Arthur Armytage!" hallooed the uncompromising voice of Jack; and "Ha! —Baltimore!—how are you?" brought the father and son-in-law quickly together, for the

iteration of Jack's often-repeated inquiry — "Where the devil is Marian?"

"She sends you a thousand kind remembrances, and this note," said Arthur, feeling in his pocket for the letter, which he had of course treated with the respect paid by all husbands to all notes consigned to them by their wives, by leaving it at home on his dressing-table.— "God bless my soul!—I must have lost the letter on the road," cried he, groping again, and again groping in vain; "or my pocket has been picked on the Course."

"Is my daughter *ill*, that she is not with your party?"—faltered Jack. "She promised to meet me here."

"Quite well,—perfectly well,—and longing to see you," answered Arthur, growing embarrassed.—"But my sister is in a very delicate state of health, and Marian, with her usual good nature, offered to stay at home with her this morning."

"Her usual good nature—when her own

father, whom she has not seen these sixteen months, was waiting to give her the meeting?" cried Jack, with a heightened complexion. "This is not like Marian,—this is none of Marian's doing,—and, by God, I'll learn the rights of it!"

"My dear Baltimore, pray moderate your feelings," cried Arthur, dismounting, and trying to lead aside the spirited pony, and no less spirited rider. "You will have an opportunity of learning all you wish to know, of Marian herself, to-morrow."

"I tell you what, Arthur Armytage," cried Jack, still in a tremulously audible voice, "'tis now near on a year and a half since we gave you our girl, and not one of her family have set eyes on her since. You, for your own part, have treated us coolly enough; and as to your Jezebel of a mother, if it had not been for the protecting petticoats which belied her sex, when she insulted me over yonder at Holywell—by Jove, I——"

"While you speak in such terms of my

mother, you must excuse my continuing the conversation," said Arthur, with firmness.

"Nay! you know well enough 'tis I who am the injured party," cried Jack; "and, by George, now you are here, you shall hear me out!"

"Baltimore! Jack — Jack Baltimore!" shouted a voice from the crowd; "Lord Sweepstakes wants to know if you take six to four on Touchstone?"

"D—n Touchstone!" cried the angry father; and one or two knowing-looking fellows, well knowing the knowing Jack Baltimore, and surmising that nothing could have so fired his blood but a disputed bet, drew near to listen, in hopes of a quarrel.

"And I tell you once for all," resumed Jack,—to whose sympathies, at that moment, all Tattersall's might have appealed in vain,— "that sooner than see my child brow-beat or ill-used among you, I will claim her for my own, and carry her home again, if there be law in the land to see her righted."

Arthur, greatly incensed by these harsh inferences, was about to make an angry answer; but Lord Armytage, who had overheard enough to understand exactly what was going on, advanced, touched his hat politely to Jack, and slightly introduced himself. "I fear you have forgotten me, Mr. Baltimore? — Lord Armytage,—I have had the pleasure of meeting you at our friend the Duke of C.'s. Allow me to assure you that I left my young relative, your daughter, at the breakfast-table this morning, in perfect health and spirits; anxious only that Mrs. Armytage should not discover her intention of absenting herself from the races, and require her to give up her amiable intention of bearing poor Miss Armytage company through the day."

"And pray, my lord, what is Mrs. Armytage doing here herself, if her daughter is so ill?" inquired Jack, somewhat pacified by the mild demeanour of Lord Armytage. "And why could nobody but Marian stay at home with Miss Sophia?"

"You must ask Miss Sophia why she prefers the society of her sister-in-law to that of any other person," rejoined his companion, giving the most gallant turn to the matter. "Mrs. Armytage is here, in order not to disappoint a very large party, collected by a long-standing engagement. But to-morrow, no doubt, your daughter will explain these things better than I can presume to do. I must refer you to your daughter."

"*To-morrow!*—you are *quite* sure, then, she is coming to-morrow?" resumed Jack more mildly, addressing Arthur Armytage.

"I see no reason, Sir, that you should doubt my word," replied the young man, growing angry as the other became tranquillized. "Marian's note would have explained all; but, as I told you at first, I have unluckily lost it."

"By George, I've half a mind to push over to Holywell this very morning!" cried Jack, musing over the opportunity afforded by the absence of Mrs. Armytage, and the vast capabilities of his pony.

"Better not do that, my dear Sir," said Lord Armytage good-naturedly. "You will lose the races, gain only twenty-four hours in seeing your daughter, and deprive Miss Armytage of the promised comfort of her society. Better not do that! Besides, as my friend Arthur has shown himself so careless a note-bearer, I offer *myself* as *your* messenger, to convey anything you may wish to say to his wife."

"Tell her, then, from me, that I will never forgive her, if, on any pretence, she disappoints me again to-morrow," said Jack;—"and many thanks, my lord, for the trouble."

And though still bewildered in his operations by vexation at Marian's absence, and his ire against Mrs. Armytage and all her tribe, Jack now became gradually sensible to the excitement of such queries as "Who rides *General Chassé* to-morrow?"—"Has any one seen Chifney this morning?"—"Is Ridsdale come?"—"Two to four on *Goldbeater!*"—"*Marcellina* against the field;"—and rode off

on catching a distant glimpse of Tom Warley and Lightweight;—the former wiping his forehead with a Belcher handkerchief, the latter with his mouth full of ham-sandwiches, both talking, all the time, familiarly of Graftons, Clevelands, Fitzwilliams, Foleys, and Exeters, "as maids of thirteen do of puppy dogs!"

Meanwhile, all Yorkshire had assembled, and Wentworths and Howards,—Dunegulbes and Lascelleses,—Vernons and Dundases,—Ramsdens, Fawkeses, and Sykeses, are beginning to grace the benches. "Grove nods at Grove, each Castle has its brother;" Park curtsied majestically to Lodge,—Lodge to Deanery,—Deanery to Rectory;—while East Riding offers its civilities to West, and West acknowledges the greeting of North. The busy murmurs of a thousand voices rise; the gay dyes of a thousand brilliant colours expand; every body is glad, every body is gay; and, excepting one pale young lady, whose new dress from town has been sent down too tight in the waist, and in whose behalf salts and aromatic

vinegar are called for, all goes well. The horses are said to be saddling, the jockeys weighing, and the course is heard to be cleared. "They are off,—they have reached the red house—here they come, there they go! the blue, the orange, the pink, the pink, the orange—the orange, the orange!—"Tomboy has won by a length and a half." "Lord A. loses four thousand: Poor Lady A.!" "Lord B. wins five: My dear Lady B., I wish you joy!"—And in the course of a few short minutes, hundreds of thousands have changed masters!

But what is the matter with Mrs. Armytage?

CHAPTER IV.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array;
Numerous as shadows, haunting fairily
The brain, new-stuff'd in youth with triumphs gay
Of old romance.—These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one lady there.

KEATS.

To whom can possibly belong the rotund figure and laughter-loving face which court the notice of the lady of Holywell, by so familiar a series of nods and becks and wreathed smiles; leaning across Lady Armytage, and whisking the tail of a bird of Paradise into the eye of Lady Chartley?

She knows not, or does not choose to know. But the stranger will not be ignored out of countenance. Rising and pushing between the benches of the stand, she exclaims, "Mrs. Armytage, senior, I believe? Between families, no need of introduction; and I am really

most anxious, Ma'am, to learn if any accident is the cause of my not seeing my niece, young Mrs. Armytage, here this morning? I expected her to come and settle with me about our trip to Scarborough."

"No *accident*, no *cause*, indeed, that I am aware of, except her own caprices," was the haughty reply. "But I beg to refer you, Madam, to Mr. Arthur Armytage, who (having perhaps the honour of your acquaintance) may be inclined to favour you to-morrow with particulars at present unknown to myself." And, turning abruptly away, Mrs. Armytage began conversing in a low voice with her cousin Lady Chartley.

"The honour of my acquaintance, Ma'am?" retorted her astonished assailant. "Ha'vn't I explained to you, then, that I am your son's aunt-in-law, Mrs. Dyke Robsey, of Portland Place? You don't appear to understand me!"

"Pardon me, I should rather imagine that you do not understand me. I leave it to my

son and daughter to make their own arrangements, and form or cultivate their own connexions; requesting only the option of selecting mine." And again she turned to Lady Chartley, who was biting her very rosy lips, in order to keep her very silly countenance.

"Well, if I ever!" exclaimed Mrs. Dyke, as she bustled back to her seat to recount her discomfiture to a pretty-looking woman, a neighbour of Tom Warley's, and her companion for the day. "If Arthur Armytage don't insist upon her making me an apology, he never darkens my doors again! I've heard of the pride of Lucifer: commend *me* to the pride of Mrs. Armytage!"

But if Mrs. Armytage had succeeded in making the stranger uncomfortable, her own morning's amusement was not forwarded by the encounter. She had sense enough to perceive that, though Lady Chartley might be amused, Lady Armytage was shocked by all she had overseen and overheard; and above all, the allusion to Marian's visit to Scar-

borough provoked her beyond measure. Although she judged it unnecessary to communicate the circumstance to her family, it had long been Mrs. Armytage's intention to comply with Dr. Grant's advice respecting Sophia, so far as to remove from Holywell to the seaside for the month of October. Scarborough, the Brighton of her native county, was her natural resource; nor did she from long prejudice admit that any other breezes could be equally salubrious,—any other sea-bathing equally invigorating. She had already, indeed, secretly engaged a house there for the remainder of the autumn; but, having learnt from Wemmersley's recent visit a similar intention on the part of the Duchess of Spalding, and now from Mrs. Dyke Robsey the plans of her daughter-in-law, she felt that her patience would be insufficient against the thousand annoyances thus presented to her apprehensions. To see and hear the name of Armytage in hourly connexion with acts and excesses of vulgarity and folly, was an ordeal she dared

not encounter. Rather than attempt it, she would write at once, and give up the house; she would alter all her undivulged plans.

It was in vain, therefore, that *Birdlime* bolted or *Belshazzar* required the whip; Mrs. Armytage cared no more for their feats than for the donkey races at Holywell Cross. It was in vain that Lady Maudsley annoyed her by asking an introduction to the Duchess of Spalding, or Lady Chartley by expressing her audible admiration of Mrs. Wemmersley's most Maradanic hat. The thoughts of Mrs. Armytage were vibrating between Bridlington Quay,—Hastings,—Nice,—Naples. At that moment she felt that she could renounce even her beloved Holywell for ever, to escape the effronteries of a Mrs. Robsey. All Yorkshire bowed to her,—all Yorkshire curtsied,—all Yorkshire congratulated her that the races and the weather had turned out so well; for Mrs. Armytage was regarded as part and parcel of the shire,—Holywellized into a grand dignitary of the riding.

Fortunately, she had already decided to return home early in the evening with Lord and Lady Armytage, Sir John and Lady Maudsley; leaving Lady Chartley and Mrs. Devereux to play the chaperon to those younger branches of the party, who saw in a good band, ball-room, and abundance of partners, the sufficient elements of an excellent ball; reserving herself for the more select one of the following night, but renouncing the St. Leger of the following morning. She could not hope to recover her equanimity sufficiently to peril a new encounter with Mrs. Dyke Robsey. Already, too, she meditated to punish Marian for her contumacy, by placing some obstacle in the way of even *her* progress to Doncaster, earlier than the morrow evening. But Lord Armytage, who had now obtained some insight into their family politics, had been struck by the vehemence of the warm-hearted Jack Baltimore's complaints, and kindly proposed driving over Marian in his phaeton to rejoin her husband, who had remained with the ball-

party in town; leaving his lady and Mrs. Armytage to make their appearance after dinner. Mrs. Arthur thanked him with all her heart; and in the course of their drive exhibited enough of her artless and affectionate nature to render him warmly her friend. For worlds he would not have lost the spectacle of her first meeting with her father.

Arthur, too, had, during his present visit to Holywell, made a highly-favourable impression on Lord Armytage. Having hitherto estimated him as a good-humoured, schoolboyish young man, trammelled in his mother's apron-strings,—an officer of the guards, but no soldier,—a member of parliament, but no representative of the people,—and, perhaps, a little piqued at Arthur's neglect and want of kinsmanly deference during the preceding spring in town, he was surprised and pleased to find him well informed on all subjects of public interest connected with his neighbourhood; discreet, honourably intentioned, and

animated by the best instincts of a sober patriotism. Lord Armytage began to hope that he might become not only an honour to the family, but to the country; and resolved to sound his political views, as well as his inclinations for a life of public service. He saw no occasion that his young relative should remain in a state of dependence during the remaining lifetime of Mrs. Armytage.

That august lady, meanwhile, "clad in her robes of high habitual state," now commenced her progress towards the Doncaster ball; by no means impatient, either of the length of the road, or the twaddle of her companions: that road being a Macadamized perfection of her beloved West Riding, and that twaddle (emanating from a Lady Maudsley and a Lady Armytage) being neither of new novels nor new fashions, after the abominations of the Spaldingites, but of Sunday-schools and Dorcas societies, the falling off of Welsh flannel, and the coming on of caoutchouc clogs. They were all wending their way to

the ball as to an annual duty, a meeting of the Eborensian parliament. There was no superfluous excitement in the feelings of the party: if they hoped anything, it was that they might get away early—if they feared anything, it was that they might take cold.

From the noble stewards of the ball, Lords Greta and Downham, Mrs. Armytage was secure of a distinguished reception; and it was her good fortune to encounter, immediately on entering the room, her friend Lord Rotherham, who, during his wife's convalescence, was under the necessity of making his appearance. On his arm, therefore, preceding Sir John Maudsley and her two dowagerly companions, she sailed majestically along the room to the place reserved for her. But although prepared for a disagreeable rencounter with Marian's relatives, she had *not* expected that the malice of the Fates, or of the Duchess of Spalding, would place Mrs. Dyke Robsey immediately next to herself. Yet *there* she was, covered with all the dia-

monds with which the united art of jewellers, mantua-makers, or milliners could contrive to adorn her person; and, thanks to that art having been exercised by the best in the metropolis, making by no means an objectionable figure. Her dress of rich violet brocade, and turban of palest gold, might have done credit even to the taste of a Mrs. Armytage.

"I have just been presented to Arthur's connexion, Mrs. Robsey," observed Lord Rotherham, as they advanced towards the sofa where the lady was seated.

"Have you? Yes! I might have concluded that my son and his wife would intrude those people on the acquaintance of all my friends."

"I beg your pardon; I have not spoken to either your son or daughter this evening. Lord Armytage was my master of the ceremonies."

"Lord Armytage? Arthur has placed them, then, under *his* protection?"

"By no means. I fancy Lord Armytage

became officially acquainted with Mr. Robsey. Armytage!" touching his Lordship on the shoulder, "where and how did you know the Robsey family?"

"Arrived at last!—my dear Madam!" exclaimed Lord A., now first noticing the Holywell party; "we were beginning to get uneasy about you. Excellent running this morning; never saw a better St. Ledger;—very pleasant dinner party; and now, I think we are going to have a capital ball. The Robseys, did you say? how did I know the Robseys?—By virtue of office. Mr. Dyke Robsey is at once one of the largest West India proprietors, and the most liberal; almost the only one with whom I experienced no trouble in the abolition business: I have the highest respect for him. Whatever objections were started by his brother-slaveholders, Robsey had but one argument against them:—'The Whigs have given us railroads and Radical reform; I consider them entitled to my vote and interest, on a question of their own!' Yet it

was a question by which he lost four thousand a-year."

"My dear father, pray allow me to present Mr. Dyke Robsey to you," said Lord Greta, suddenly arresting Lord Rotherham's progress, and directing his attention to a little shrivelled mummy of a man, who, under sanction of Lord Armytage's recent commendation, was received with the utmost deference by the high-minded Lord of Greta Castle. And, having deposited Mrs. Armytage as quickly as he could in her appointed place, he began to do the honours of the county to a stranger whose liberal principles conferred distinction on his physical exiguity. While the lady of Holywell drew in her robes, lest they should encounter those of the lady of Portland Place, Mrs. Dyke had the satisfaction to observe her good little mannikin of a husband engaged in conversation with three noble lords; and to know that the respect paid him by the heads of the house of Greta and Armytage, borrowed nothing from his affinity with the

Semiramis seated by her side. Soon afterwards, Lord Rotherham requested from his new acquaintance an introduction to his lady; and Mrs. Armytage, though affecting to be engaged in earnest conversation with her next neighbour, Lady Maudsley, could not forbear overhearing fragments of their chit-chat.

"Yes! indeed!—highly delighted with Yorkshire. My first visit to the county; but not likely to be my last. Capital races! finest thing of the kind in Europe,—best county-meeting in England: so different from a scramble to Epsom or Ascot!"

Lord Rotherham "trusted she had been able to secure comfortable accommodations?"

"Accommodations? Oh, dear! yes! The best that were to be had for money. Arthur Armytage (poor fellow!) wrote good naturedly to apologize for not being able to invite us to stop at Holywell; as if we had any notion of burying ourselves at a place nearly twenty miles off, when good lodgings were to be had in the town! Lord bless him! my brother

Baltimore's friend, Tom Warley, took rooms for us at the Angel six months back. Famous rooms! So good, indeed, that we have been able to oblige the Duchess of Spalding with a bed or two. Her party has turned out larger than she expected!"

Lord Rotherham, with a civil smile, now "hoped that she was going to make some stay in Yorkshire?"

"Six weeks or two months, at least. My niece Armytage (that such a woman should *have* a niece Armytage! the word grated painfully on the ear of her neighbour) is coming along with us to Scarborough."

"To Scarborough?" His Lordship expressed great satisfaction at the intelligence. His own family were likely to visit Scarborough; and Lady Rotherham would be much gratified in the honor of her acquaintance.

Mrs. Robsey bowed and smiled, and fanned herself. She was eminently triumphant—eminently happy. Her dear little Marian

had been with her all the morning; grateful, simple, and affectionate as ever: and now, the whole world—the whole *great* world—seemed entering into a conspiracy to support her cause against Mrs. Armytage. The Duchess of Spalding, who, though apprehensive of promiscuous acquaintances in London, would have felt herself privileged to patronize even a cheesemonger in Yorkshire, without peril to her purity of caste, had, for her own convenience, made acquaintance with the gorgeous stranger, and loaded her with civilities; on which all the small 'squiresses who, at first sight set up their backs at a London woman who ventured to blaze forth at Doncaster without the passport of a county introduction, forgave her, under the sanction of such powerful protection. Mrs. Wemmersley had already bespoken Marian's presentation to her aunt; and Lady Emily Maclaren grew full of graciousness, worthy the wife of the Whig member for Perjureham.

But Marian was now too generally courted,

too universally admired, to have leisure to become the tool of the Wemmersleys. The happiness derived from her recent restoration to her family, imparted a thousand charms to her countenance—a thousand graces to her manner—a thousand of those pure and nameless graces which, like the fragrance of flowers, or song of birds, start forth at Nature's command, and Nature's only. Caressed by the Spaldings, treated with the utmost deference by the whole of the Holywell party, the minor members of the neighbourhood, who had hitherto been given to understand, or who had taken it into their heads to understand, that the marriage of young Armytage was a grievous *mésalliance,* were amazed to find her the niece of a member of parliament, rich in the good graces of their carved idols, the aristocracy of the county; and of a gorgeous dame, rich in chains and bouquets of brilliants, rivalling those of the Duchess of Spalding. They began to entertain a better opinion of her; and Mrs. Dyke had the satisfaction to

hear it buzzed, in that kind of audible murmur seldom heard except in country ball-rooms,—"That pretty little woman in the pink dress and tiara of diamond wheat-ears is wife to the new member for Thoroton;" or,—"I had no idea that young Mrs. Armytage of Holywell was such a pretty, elegant, little creature. She will be quite one of our county beauties!"

The difficulties of the part which Marian had to play between mother-in-law and aunt, meanwhile, were surmounted with a discretion which evinced considerable accession of tact. With Mrs. Armytage, she was respectful and attentive; with Mrs. Robsey, affectionate and assiduous; without attempting, by look, gesture, or inference, to bring them nearer together. All assumption of arrogance on the part of Mrs. Armytage was thus rendered superfluous. The lady in the violet-satin by her side, seemed utterly unconscious of her presence; and instead of wishing to intrude on her acquaintance, was wholly engrossed by

those more brilliant personages who were so assiduously seeking her own.

At supper, too, the great lady of Holywell had the dissatisfaction of beholding her Mordecai the Jew exalted even above herself. Lord Wyndham Spalding, in gratitude for the excellent stables for which he was indebted to the stranger's good nature, had taken care to secure her a seat among those reserved for his mother's party; and the shrewd eyes of the Duchess having readily detected the feud between her and the object of her Yorkshire antipathies, seized with avidity an opportunity of inflicting mortification on Mrs. Armytage. Winsome Wyn, professionally eschewing the part of a young lady's man, or induced perhaps by secret motives of his own, constituted himself her cavalier; and poor Mrs. Robsey, between the patronage of a Lord and a Duchess, was almost as elated as Jack Baltimore had been that morning, when he found himself a winner on Touchstone, of six hundred and thirty odd sovereigns, lawful coin of the realm.

Every one, in short, was pleased. Every one retired to rest that night in the best of humours with the events and diversions of the day, with the exception indeed of one, whose fate it seemed to be to mar a life of prosperity, by the undue exactions of an imperious temper.

CHAPTER V.

Yet natural are selfish predilections:
Like snakes they writhe about the heart's affections,
And sometimes, too, infuse a poisonous spirit;
Producing, as by naturalists I'm told,
Torpid insensibility,—stone-cold
To every human brother's merit.

Dr. Wolcot.

It had been arranged between Marian and her family, that although Mrs. Robsey was to proceed to Scarborough on the day following the races, Arthur and herself should consult the convenience of Mrs. Armytage, by remaining at Holywell till the breaking up of the party assembled under her roof. *She,* of course, on learning their determination, insisted on being no obstacle to their movements, ("no deference—no consideration, was due to *her*") and was peremptory in offering herself up a victim; but Arthur, finding no other plea avail, begged permission to testify his respect towards his

father's relative, Lord Armytage, by postponing the Scarborough journey till after his departure. Now this was adding fuel to the flames of her displeasure; for she had ever made it a matter of petty pride, to estrange the children of her husband from his nobler connexions; and had the vexation to perceive the good understanding between Arthur, and even Marian, and the Armytages hourly increase; till she heartily wished the period of their visit at an end, and herself at liberty to devise new schemes for change of scene for her daily drooping daughter.

It was on the day following the concluding one of the races, when Marian happened to be absent from the drawing-room on a visit to Sophia, who found herself too much indisposed to join the party, that in the course of a discussion on the beauties present at the races, and the flirtations implied or discovered, one of the tall, stiff, Londonized Miss Maudsleys fell into raptures of admiration concerning Rosamond Devonport; the style of whose attractions

she felt to be too different from her own to threaten danger to her conquest.

"Rosa was such a charming little creature, —so sweet,—so *naïve*,—so completely a child of the cloister."

"But what an awkward thing for the Spalding family," cried her elder sister, who had imbibed a tinge of their brother Reginald's pedantry; "if she should prove the cause of family dissension between the two brothers; and create a second Creon and Polynices!"

"No cause for alarm, I fancy," observed Mrs. Armytage. "Lord Wyndham Spalding may render Miss Devonport a screen to other views; but depend upon it, *he* is not a marrying man."

"But how impossible to say, who *is* and who is not a marrying man!" cried the giddy Lady Chartley. "That wooden sign-post of a Yankee, whom my cousin Arthur showed me on the race-course,—*who* would have ever dreamed of *his* making an impression on a

niece of the Duke of Spalding's? And I am told they are to be married next week!"

"No wonder poor Miss Marscourt was ashamed of such a bridegroom," cried one of the younger Maudsleys. "Lady Amabel Spalding informed me at the ball, with a significant smile, that her poor, dear, little, timid cousin Pen could not be prevailed on to come to the St. Leger, for fear of drawing the attention of the county. And then it was so amusing to hear every one congratulating poor Mrs. Wemmersley on her uncle's marriage."

"I do not imagine," observed Mrs. Armytage, "that the match can be more disagreeable to the Wemmersley family, who are so ambitious of high connexions, than an alliance between Lord Downham and Miss Devonport would be to the Spaldings themselves!"

"Why, who *is* Miss Devonport?" inquired Mrs. Devereux, who was little enough to feel *the greater* for figuring among the collateral branches of an Irish peerage.

"Any relation to Sir Clement Devonport, who used to sit for Bridgnorth?" inquired Sir John.

"The daughter of some obscure planter, I fancy," replied Mrs. Armytage; "deriving her position in society solely from the protection of my friend Mrs. Di Maranham."

"Ay, by the bye—and my friend Mrs. Di Maranham," interrupted Lord Armytage, "pray what has become of her?—I did not observe her at the races?—Doncaster, without Mrs Di Maranham's gray crop and curricle, loses half its attractions! You have not yet seen the Grange?" he continued, addressing Mrs. Devereux, who was visiting Holywell for the first time. "The Grange is in *my* opinion one of the great lions of the neighbourhood—one of the wonders of Yorkshire. There is not space for such places in any lesser county. In Surrey or Hertfordshire, the whole family would have been bought out by some smart banker's lady, and the old mansion thrown down to make way for a villa

with a rustic portico. You must ask Mrs. Armytage to drive you over to see the Grange."

"Most willingly; to-morrow, or any other day. This morning, I fear, the horses will scarcely be at our disposal," observed the lady of the house.

But it appeared that on the morrow, General and Mrs. Devereux, impatient to return to their children, were to proceed back into Leicestershire. How very provoking! The Grange, commended so highly by Lord Armytage, became an immediate object of interest.

"I believe we are to have a riding party this morning," observed one of the Maudsleys. "You ride, Mrs. Devereux? I have often seen the place, and will willingly give up my horse; and as Mrs. Arthur Armytage is to accompany you, she can introduce you to the Maranhams."

"I am afraid *not*," said Mrs. Armytage drily. "I fancy the gates will be closed against any persons presenting themselves under the auspices of Mrs. Arthur Armytage."

"Aha!" cried Lord Armytage, becoming interested in the subject; "are the old ladies jealous of her youth and beauty?—I thought Miss Anarilla, whom I saw acting chaperon at the ball, answered me somewhat tartly when I expressed my very great admiration of my friend Arthur's choice."

"How shockingly ungracious!" cried Mrs. Devereux. "I should have thought Mrs. Arthur a person too mild to give offence to any one!'

"Nevertheless," resumed Mrs. Armytage, "my old friends, the Misses Maranham, have expressed their determination never to set foot at Holywell so long as my daughter-in-law remains my inmate; and formally requested to be dispensed from her future visits to the Grange."

"War to the knife, then!" cried Lord Armytage. "Why, the old women must be demented. If Mrs. Devereux will accept my unworthy escort, we will ride over to the Grange and bring them to reason or demand

satisfaction. My dear Mrs. Arthur!" cried he, addressing Marian, who just then entered the room, with a countenance depressed by her daily increasing uneasiness on Sophia's account, "What is the meaning of all this? What crime of *lèse pruderie*, or other outrage against the rigid code of spinster morality, have you committed, to merit sentence of exclusion from the gates of the Grange?"

"*Am* I excluded from the gates of the Grange?" inquired Marian, relapsing into one of her sweet smiles. "I was not aware of it; but I fear I deserve my sentence."

"Indeed! You excite my wonder and curiosity."

"While on a visit at Spalding Court, I was foolish enough to accompany Lady Emily Maclaren to the Grange; and (out of deference to the political prejudices of the family) presented her under a feigned name. By some means or other, Mrs. Di discovered the imposture."

"The cloven foot of Toryism peeped out, I

suppose. I dare say Lady Emily began canvassing Mrs. Di for Lord Leicester Spalding's next election."

"No—indeed; she never ventured to open her lips."

"Lady Emily Maclaren struck dumb? Why this is a more exquisite song than the other."

"I have reason to believe that Mrs. Maranham's displeasure is of a nature far more deeply rooted,"—said Mrs. Armytage mysteriously; "but, with your Lordship's permission, we will not now discuss the subject. Can any one inform me what has become of my son? Has any one seen my son?"

And on learning from Marian that Arthur had walked with General Devereux into the village, in order to show him the school-houses, the plan and system of which the General was desirous of obtaining, with a view to improving those on his own estate, the brow of Mrs. Armytage became heavily overclouded. This was a decided breach of privilege on the part

of her son! There was nothing she more dearly loved than doing the honours of every establishment connected with Holywell. The plans, excellent in themselves, were her own: and no one but herself, she conceived, could do justice to their particularities.

"Had my son condescended to apprise *me* of General Devereux's desire," said she, "I should have felt much honoured by the task of explaining to him the principles of my school."

"I believe they are gone to visit Dr. Grant," said Marian, in an apologizing tone. "General Devereux has some private business to talk over with Dr. Grant."

"I should not be surprised if it were about the Swimmingley living!" cried Mrs. Devereux, rousing herself from her lounging position. "The General had a letter yesterday from his steward, informing him of a most shocking accident in our establishment." (Lord Armytage and the rest were of opinion that, whatever might be the nature of the catastrophe,

it had not very seriously influenced the spirits of either the General or his wife; but the lady did not leave them in suspense.) "The Rector of Swimmingley has been unluckily killed by the accidental discharge of his gun when out shooting; and Devereux, who purchased the advowson with the estate, is determined he will have no more sporting parsons so near us. He proposes, indeed, to give his preferment to the most deserving person he can find. I wanted him to present my cousin Hamilton Lyndsay, Lord Lyndsay's younger son; but he was ill-natured enough to say that Hamilton was an empty coxcomb, and would not hear of him. The living amounts to nearly a thousand a-year."

"That would be a great thing for our friend Grant," said Lord Armytage, addressing his elder kinswoman. "I heartily trust the General may be induced to offer it to him. He could nowhere find a more upright, a more conscientious parish priest."

Mrs. Armytage, accustomed to regard Dr.

Grant as a domestic apanage of Holywell,— "her ox, her ass, her goods, her chattels," as much a portion of her property as Holywell church, which she considered less the House of God than the chapelry of Holywell Park,— almost trembled with excitement at the prospect of having him subtracted from her service by the officious interposition of others. And the danger appeared imminent.

"What a windfall for the poor Doctor!" cried Sir John Maudsley, who had been poring over the county paper.

"But what a loss for *us!*" ejaculated Marian. And Mrs. Armytage had scarcely patience with the collective pronoun purporting to associate the niece of Mrs. Robsey with the Holywell family, on such an occasion.

"I can scarcely imagine," said she, with great hauteur, "that my son would take any step in an affair of so much importance to myself, without first consulting my intentions!"

"You must forgive him, my dear Madam,

you really must forgive him," cried Lord Armytage,—if we find that zeal for the advancement of so excellent a man as Dr. Grant has caused my friend Arthur to act with precipitation."

But at that moment, Mrs. Armytage was deaf to the voice of the charmer. She was engrossed by silent regrets, — secret repentance, — that her love of prerogative had so long prevented her pledging herself to Dr. Grant for the gift of the living of Thoroton, whenever it might fall vacant. Aware as she was of the expectations he must have been necessarily tempted to form, not a word had she ever uttered in explanation of her intentions. And now, she was probably about to lose him, in just retribution of her fault!

She was not, however, the woman to resign herself to defeat. Prompt in determination,—prompt in action,—she passed immediately to the library, and, within a few minutes of Mr. Devereux's communication, one of the Holywell servants was bearing hastily across the

park to the vicarage, the following communication from his lady:—

"Having accidentally learned, my dear Sir, the stirring temptations held out to you to desert a neighbourhood where I have long indulged hopes of seeing you fixed for life, I take the opportunity of offering, as an alternative, the reversion of my living of Thoroton; and, till it fall vacant, a compensatory salary of one thousand per annum. With these inducements, pray place in the scale the perfect esteem, respect, and gratitude of your obliged friend and neighbour,

"Caroline Maudsley Armytage."

But, on returning to the drawing-room after the despatch of this important missive, the patroness was disagreeably startled by the sight of two unwelcome objects; her little grand-daughter, whose presence had been earnestly begged by the ladies of the party, in order to while away a heavy morning;—and

Mr. Leonidas Lomax, come to pay a formal visit of leave-taking to the Holywell family, previously to the solemnization of his illustrious nuptials. She was provoked to hear the admiration bestowed on the animation of little Harriet, crowing and laughing in the arms of the good-natured Lord Armytage; but was fortunately spared the tirade with which Leonidas had been privately edifying Sir John Maudsley, during her absence.

"I own it afflicts me," said Leo. Lo. (having, since his august connexion with the peerage, renounced the defence of the "federal" principle for that of the "feudal")—"to see an ancient line like this of Holywell, centering at length in yonder little feeble *gurl.* The Salique law is still in operation among the fiefs of the empire,—(*in terram Salicam mulieres ne succedant,*) and it were much to be desired that though, as the immortal bard of Avon sings,

> —the land Salique lies in Germany,
> Between the floods of Sala and of Elbe,

its custom of inheritance should prevail throughout the world. What error, alas!—*what crimes*,—have arisen under the ascendancy of female domination!—Semiramis of old, the murderer of her husband; Christina of Sweden, the murderer of her secretary; Elizabeth of England, the murderer of her lovers; Elizabeth of Russia, and Anne of England, martyrs of intemperance; Catherine the Second, that prominent blot on modern history,—are fearful examples of the mischiefs arising from feminine supremacy. It is contrary to Scripture,—Sir, it is contrary to reason, to attribute to the weaker vessel—"

He paused, and stood (his oratorical right arm extended) like the image of a man carved in hickory,—not venturing to proceed; for Mrs. Armytage just then re-entered the room; and a single glance of her penetrating eyes suspended the current of Leonidas's Yankee eloquence.

CHAPTER V.

Yes! I had hopes, and they are fled;
And I had fears, were all too true;
My wishes, too,—but they are dead—
And what have I with life to do?
'Tis but to bear a weary load
I may not, must not cast away;—
To sigh for one small still abode
Where I may sleep as still as they.

St. Leger.

A few more days elapsed, and the Holywell party was dispersed, when Arthur and his wife, after an affectionate farewell from Sophia, and a ceremonious one from Mrs. Armytage, proceeded on their tour. Arthur's last visit was to Greta Castle, to bespeak from Lady Laura, for his sister, during their absence, that warmer assiduity of kindness which sickness demands, and for which her own brother, previous to his return to his official duties, had already pleaded; a visit which proved sufficient to

lend new attractions to the Scarborough road, in the eyes of his jealous little wife.

And now Marian's prospects were indeed enchanting! Six weeks' liberty, — six weeks' emancipation, — her husband, child, father, aunt; the sea, the shore, the new and beautiful country,—rides, drives, dinners, balls, with her kind friends the Spaldings; what a change from that chain-armoury of feuds and ceremonies,—Holywell Park! But for the mournful tenderness with which, at parting, Miss Armytage hung over and embraced her little niece, Marian would not have had a sorrow or a care in the world!

And then the cordial reception of Aunt Robsey, and the good little senator's exulting exclamation to Arthur, of—"Obliged to sleep at Malton?—ay, ay!—when we have brought in our bill for the Scarborough rail-road, you will drive over from Holywell to take a sea-water bath, and back again for dinner." While his lady, full of the joys of libraries and raffles, moss-agates, and cornelians, loudly exulted in

the prospect of six weeks' busy idleness at a watering-place.

All Mrs. Arthur's anticipations appeared on the eve of realization, with the exception of the balls; for, already, the servants, horses, and other cattle, belonging to the Spalding family had arrived the preceding day, at the vast, red-brick barn engaged for them,—the servants in *un*customary suits of solemn black,—the very horses with sable rosettes to their blinkers. It was clear that they were all very sorry about something; and, by a little dexterous whispering among the gentry of the Lower Chamber, or servants' hall, (which contrary to the custom of other chambers, borrows its intelligence directly from the Upper House, or steward's room,) Mrs. Dyke managed to ascertain that her Grace had lost a brother, and Lord Wyndham gained a title and estate; a small estate, —but a title no less flowing than that of Baron Wildingham of Wildingham. The loss, and, consequently, the gain, seemed unexpected. For the late lord, who was by many years the

junior of the Duchess, a long life had been anticipated; and many people were of opinion that he had been, with malice prepense, tormented into a pleurisy by her Grace, who chose to detect a Murillo, for which he had given four thousand pounds, to be a copy; and had pointed out a flaw in the finest of his fictile vases:—facts which, had they come to th-knowledge of Leo. Lo. (or as the London Gazette now entitled us to call him, Mr. Lomax Marscourt), coupled with the terms of entail conveying title and fortune to his sister's second son, might perhaps have added a new chapter to his dissertation on the crimes consequent upon female domination.

"As I knew nothing of the old Lord," said Mrs. Robsey to Arthur, "I am mighty glad your friend has come to his estate. But such a coxcomb as he was before,—bless us all!—what will he be *now?*"

"You are mistaken," was the well-judging reply. "Wyn was a coxcomb, because he fancied puppyism the only means of distinc-

tion within his reach;—now he finds himself somebody, he will think of distinction as a thing indifferent."

"For my part," said aunt Robsey, looking very wise, "I don't quite understand about what you call puppyism,—particularly about French puppyism. Now there was that fashionable Monsieur Clerrymill who used to dine so often in Portland Place last season——"

"Monsieur Cléramel and his flute?" interrupted Marian.

"Exactly, my dear!—Monsieur Clerrymill and his flute had always a knife and fork at our table; and there he used to sit, sable from head to foot,—not an inch of cambric,—not a colour—not a trinket to be seen;—black and all black, as my brother Baltimore would say, like Romeo when he breaks open the tomb of the Capulets: and when I inquired of some particular friend of his whether it was for his father or his mother Monsieur was in mourning, the friend laughed and said, 'Clerrymill was a

jeune élégant, and that it was the height of French dandyism to be as black as a crow.'"

"And so it is," said Marian.

"And pray then what was the meaning of Lord Wyndham's flashy waistcoats, and chains, and studs, and all his nonsenses?—When he used to drive his cab through Pall Mall with his hat stuck on one side, and his cream-coloured gloves,—he always put me in mind of a dandy in a farce. There certainly must be two kinds of French puppyism."

"Exactly! There is the puppyism of the many, which affects to shrink into simplicity, on pretence of a very superfluous desire to pass unnoticed. But there is also the puppyism of the few,—the glaring, flashy puppyism of those who fancy themselves in a position which entitles them to attract attention. The novel of 'Pelham' drove half the young Frenchmen out of their senses. Not detecting the irony of its pages, they founded a matter-of-fact school of Pelhamites;—and the English caricature

was adopted as an historical picture on the Boulevards. Pelham did more mischief to *la jeune France,* than all the works of Voltaire or Rousseau."

"Well, it certainly was a most amusing book!" cried Mrs. Robsey, taking her own view of the case: "and, now you remind me of it, I declare Lord Wyndham, or as we must now call him Lord Wildingham, *is* or *was* the very image of Henry Pelham."

It was some time, however, before Mrs. Dyke had an opportunity of deciding what influence his accession to the peerage had exercised over the object of her conjectures. The Duchess and her daughters arrived,—all crape and broad hems,—escorted by the apathethic Lord Cecil; but Lord Downham was off to Brighton to take a course of Mahomet's beauty baths; and Lord Wildingham to London, to confer with his lawyers, call in his debts, study his rent-roll, and luxuriate in the newly-acquired troubles of a man of fortune. In all this, meanwhile, it was plain that there

was something vexatious to her Grace. While grief depressed the corners of her mouth, indignation contracted the arching of her jetty eyebrows. It might be that she had expected to find honourable mention of herself, as well as her son, in the will of the late lord; it might be that she had obtained from her daughters some hint of the sudden passion conceived by the present, for the Rose of the Grange; it might be that the answers brought back every morning by her page from Donner's Hotel, respecting a suite of apartments said to be, supposed to be, or expected to be engaged for the Duke of Wetherby, were of an unsatisfactory nature.

Yet, even lacking both the Duke and the Baron, Scarborough was gay and pleasant enough for the world in general. The weather was fine. There was the castle hill to explore, the ruins to sketch, Robin Hood's Bay to traverse, Filey and its wild and breezy shore to make the object of a drive. The soft and autumnal-tinted valley leading to Hack-

ness, afforded many a charming ride—many a charming saunter; after which, late dinners, a little music, and a little gossip, filled up the sober hours of those who affected weak health and sea-bathing as an excuse for frequenting a watering-place.

Marian was perfectly happy. She could not understand what induced the Spaldings to protest with peevish discontent that they had never seen Scarborough so dull, so disagreeable, so empty; "not a soul there—not a *chat de société!*" It did not occur to her that the absence of a single, silent duke had made so vast a deficiency in the attractions of the place; nor was she aware that poor Lady Honoria, having flattered herself of being followed from Doncaster by Lord Edward Brereton, was chewing the young lady-like "cud of sweet and bitter fancies." Not even the prospect of the arrival of the bride and bridegroom, "Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt," seemed to afford any hope of diversion to the Spalding family. While Mr. Dyke

Robsey, unable to keep pace with the vivacity of an Arthur Armytage, or to penetrate the tortoise-like inaccessibility of Lord Leicester Spalding, flattered himself that in the ex-citizen of the free country, he should meet with sympathy in his diminutive enthusiasm for the cause of railroads and radical reform, while his gay lady rejoiced in the prospect of a peep at the wedding-clothes of an aristocratic bride,—the lady cousins voted all the world a bore, and all the men and women merely torments. Mrs. Arthur Armytage might find amusement in trotting on a long-tailed pony on the sands of Filey, or admiring the golden beeches of Hackness;—but what profitless pleasures for the unmarried daughters of a Duchess of Spalding!

Far different meanwhile were the mournfully meditative looks that fixed themselves upon those falling autumnal leaves, among the groves of Holywell! Sophia Armytage felt with that inward conviction, which is one of the most gracious inspirations of divine

love, that she was gazing upon them for the last time;—felt it, not without awe, not without exultation. She could not accuse herself of having given way to idle sorrow; who, amid all her griefs and disappointments,

> Some natural tears had dropp'd
> But wiped them soon;

and the blight which had fallen upon her frame seemed as inevitable a dispensation as that which, on a sunny summer day, will breathe upon the choicest flower-garden—

> And nip its buds from blowing!

Satisfied that she had been marked for early death, the victim had at length so far surmounted the clinging predilections of mortality, as to admit that all had chanced for the best; that as a happy wife—perhaps a happy mother—she might have found this barren world "enough for bliss," and clung with too fast a hold upon the tendernesses of human life. Yes! all had been for the best!

The way to death was now comparatively

easy. The lover of her youth had forsaken her;—her brother was happy in household ties of a more engrossing nature;—her mother (Sophia *could* not flatter herself that she was essential to the happiness of her mother!) had a new race springing around her; even the little Grants were growing up to womanhood, and might dispense with her instructions. She knew that when *she* was gone, her poor would still be clothed, her hungry fed, her sick comforted. She felt that she had a right to die! The father who has a family to toil for,—the mother with babes to nurture and to cherish,—*must* live,—*must* struggle with disease,—*must* resist the longing after immortality, or yearning for the stillness of the grave. But Sophia Armytage, as she gazed upon

> La face des eaux, le front des montagnes
> Ridés et non vieillis,—et les bois toujours verts—

could feel that her task was accomplished, her day of peace appointed; could murmur—

Mais moi, sous chaque jour, courbant plus bas ma tête,
Je passe,—et, refroidie sous ce soleil joyeux,
Je m'en irai bientôt, au milieu de la fête,
Sans que rien manque au monde, immense et radieux!

Still, nothing could, would, or did excite on her account the apprehensions of Mrs. Armytage. She saw that her daughter was "very delicate—very weak;" but Sophia had never been strong; and no positive disorder having declared itself, time and care would no doubt complete her restoration. Lady Rotherham, too, was an unlucky neighbour for such a case. Lady Rotherham had seen so many delicate girls recovered even from the depths of a consumption by asses' milk, and a certain preparation of Iceland moss, that Sophia Armytage scarcely yet appeared sufficiently ill to justify the infallibility of her specific!

Lady Laura was the only person who discerned the truth. Lady Laura, who knew the happiness of a dearly-loved brother to be centered in Sophia's restoration to health and cheerfulness, scarcely suffered a day to pass without assuring herself, by the evidence of

her own tearful eyes, that the invalid was weaker than on the day preceding. The name of Rainsford had never been mentioned between them from the period when both became assured of the solemnization of his marriage, and Lady Laura was guided only by her own suppositions, in the belief that her friend's disorder was seated beyond the reach of human aid. Still she *did* believe it; and honestly admit to Lord Greta her conviction that he was building his hopes of happiness on a foundation of sand. Finding it impossible to alarm Mrs. Armytage, she even addressed her own father and mother with earnest entreaties that they would interpose their influence to procure the best advice, and change of atmosphere and scene, for her fast-declining friend.

But a more powerful advocate than either was enlisted in the cause. Dr. Grant, who had been persevering in his hopes that strength of mind and force of youth would enable Miss Armytage to surmount the blow

she had received,—who even trusted that his own exhortations might suffice to impress her with the sinfulness of yielding to the ascendancy of vain regrets and fruitless affections,—at length discerned the imminency of the danger, and felt it incompatible with his duty to conceal the truth from Mrs. Armytage.

He had recently acquired a double right of remonstrance with his patroness. General Devereux had made it his business to acquaint her with the good pastor's immediate and unqualified refusal of the rich preferment tendered to him; and she had not only the gratification to know that, in his love for the flock committed to his hand, he had chosen to remain dependent on her will, but had even refused the temporary provision assigned to him by her liberality. "Had you judged it due to my services, my dear Madam, you would have tendered it long ago," was his proud reply. "The labourer is worthy of his hire. When I am appointed to fulfil the duties of rector of Thoroton, the stipend will

naturally be mine." And the haughty woman's respect for the vicar of Holywell had been a thousand-fold increased by this evidence of his nobleness of mind.

Dr. Grant had at all times access to her presence; and when, one evening, after a prolonged visit to Sophia, he requested an audience of Mrs. Armytage in her library, she simply attributed the request to some dilemma of village business,—some one of a family of fifteen children to be apprenticed,—some aged woman to be admitted into the infirmary,—some youthful depredator to be chastised or admonished,—some dutiful child rewarded. She entered the library, therefore, with her most magisterial air,—with that stately step which spoke her descent from the Maudsleys of Domesday Book, and her presiding over an estate of fifteen thousand per annum.

But, after an hour's conference, very different was the gait with which she re-crossed the hall! Not David, when shrinking beneath the rebuke of Nathan, could have worn an air

more conscience-struck! Her face was ghastly —her step faltering. Grief for her daughter's danger was deepened into despair by her knowledge of its origin. She would have given much to have kneeled down beside Sophia's couch, and poured out her agony in tears. But Dr. Grant had insisted so strongly on the urgency of avoiding all cause of agitation for the invalid, that she could only retire to indulge in solitary misery,—to commune with her own heart, and in her chamber, and be still!

CHAPTER VI.

Her griefs, her joys, alike, in vain
Would memory here recall;
Her throbs of ecstasy or pain
Lull'd in oblivion all.
With *her*, methinks, life's little hour
Pass'd, like the fragrance of a flower,
That leaves upon the vernal wind
Sweetness we ne'er again may find.

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

THE following day was a busy day at Holywell. The Doncaster physician, so highly esteemed by Mrs. Armytage, having been hastily summoned, was at the house soon after day-break; and after hearing a decided opinion that no time must be lost in Sophia's removal to the South, her mother issued orders for instant preparations for their departure. On the following morning they were to start for Clifton.

"My dear mother," whispered Sophia, as soon as they were alone together, "all this is

useless *now*. Let me stay quietly at Holywell—let me die at home.' The journey is a needless disturbance. I wish to remain near Dr. Grant. I wish——"

"You wish to break my heart!" cried Mrs. Armytage, giving way to an unusual burst of emotion. "You would deny me even the poor comfort of doing my utmost for your restoration to health. A few weeks in the mild climate of Bristol, and your recovery is certain. Will you refuse me the trial of a few weeks?"

And how could Sophia refuse? A few weeks—a few weeks to the mother who had given her life!—A few weeks, when she knew that her very days were numbered!

"Let us at least remain at Holywell," she still remonstrated, "till Arthur and Marian are apprized of our intentions. I should like to see them once more before——" She could not conclude her sentence!

But no! A delay of four days was indispensable to secure the interview. The weather

was already chilly, the days short, and the necessity for immediate change of air most urgent. Mrs. Armytage decided that they must quit Holywell on the morrow.

And on the morrow they went. Sophia would willingly have paid one last visit to the village—have entered for the last time, and with reverential step, the portals of Holywell church—have thrown herself once more into the arms of her dear Laura, her childhood's friend —have uttered a parting word to her good old nurse—a parting blessing to her spiritual teacher. But Mrs. Armytage decided that all this was not to be; and Dr. Grant, kindly coinciding in her desire, would not even permit his girls to show themselves at the Vicarage window as the carriage passed its gates, lest the excitement should prove injurious to his young friend. *He,* indeed, watched it, unseen ;—*unseen* observed the wistful glance cast by Sophia towards the eastern window of the church, where glimmered the marble monuments of the family of Maudsley — where

lay the grave of her father. But he heard also the blessings poured upon her name as he slowly followed the progress of the carriage through the village. He heard the prayers of the poor for her recovery. He saw both old and young turning within their doors to weep that they had looked, perhaps, for the last time on the pale face of their benefactress. And he saw that all was well—that the servant of the Lord might depart in peace—that her burthen had been nobly borne.

It was not till a week afterwards that, by a letter dated from Worcester, Arthur was apprized of his mother's movements. Dr. Grant, satisfied that Mrs. Armytage must have communicated all to her son, was too much absorbed by his own feelings to find leisure for writing an unnecessary letter; and Lady Laura, although she suspected the real state of the case, having been officiously acquainted by Mrs. Wemmersley that she was an object of jealous suspicion to Arthur's wife, resisted the kindly impulses of her

nature. But even his mother's letter excited no particular alarm. It merely informed him that she was advised to pass the winter at Clifton—that Sophia had borne the journey well, and was already improving in health; and that, as he must be in town the following month for the meeting of parliament, she concluded Marian would either remain with her family at Scarborough, or accompany them to London.

Mrs. Armytage's "conclusions" were always conclusive. Arthur saw at once, therefore, that it was not intended either himself or his wife should pass the winter at Holywell; although, as it was expected that parliament would be almost immediately prorogued, nothing would have better suited his inclinations than to leave his wife in the country during his short absence, and return to pass a cheerful, neighbourly, sporting winter, at home,—the home that was in fact his own. Unapprized of the sinister opinions recently given by her medical advisers of the state of Sophia's health, and

receiving no letter from his sister, he felt secretly convinced that Mrs. Armytage had suddenly quitted the country only to avoid hearing or seeing more of the Robseys, whom she might fancy were likely to be delayed in Yorkshire by the civilities of the Gretas, or the hospitality of Spalding Castle; under such circumstances, he felt that Sophia would be too tender of Marian's feelings to write,—lest the truth should become apparent.

What else but such self-deception arising from the unjustifiable reserve of his mother, would have prevented the kind affectionate Arthur from flying to the solace of his dying sister,—protecting her on her melancholy journey,—soothing her desolate hours,—comforting her occasional despondency, from being all in all, in short, to one who was falling a victim to wounded affections,—to neglect,—to desertion. But deceived as he was, Arthur continued to ride, to laugh, to chat, to dance, to sing,—while the companion of his earliest love was resigning herself to that gradual progress

of hectic decay, which seems as though the icy fingers of death were daily stealing higher and higher upon the shrinking bosom, till their fatal seal is affixed upon the quivering lips, and the breath of life becomes extinct beneath their touch!

Marian, indeed, would often sigh for news of the invalid—often write and often wonder that her letters remained unanswered. She loved to describe to her aunt the angelic mildness of Sophia's character, the consolation she had derived from her warm affection in the chilling atmosphere of Holywell; the expectations she feared she must now renounce of finding a friend—a steadfast, estimable, exemplary friend, in the sister of her husband: and, in detailing to her aunt the symptoms of Miss Armytage, and the rapid manner in which her disorder had developed itself, she would inquire very earnestly whether Mrs. Robsey discerned any tokens of the family infirmity in little Harriet—or whether she thought dear Arthur likely to prove consump-

tive? But the good lady reassured her at once. She saw neither pulmonary ailment in Marian's darlings, nor suspected a distemper of the mind in the sufferings of Sophia.

"My dear, the case is plain enough!" said she. "The poor girl has been moped to death No London, no Brighton, no Bath, like other young persons of her age;—nothing but that overbearing despot of a woman for a companion, nothing to cheer her, nothing to amuse her;—I am sure I can't imagine what pleasure the poor soul ever found in life."

"But if Sophia had pleased to marry Lord Greta, who has been so long attached to her, then she might have had London, and court, and jewels, and all the things you say women are so fond of,—yet, you see, she preferred Holywell!"

"Well—there is no accounting for tastes," was Mrs. Robsey's reply, "for I must say I never saw a more agreeable, sensible young man than Lord Greta. And though Lord Botherum—Rotherham—(what is his name?)

is not perhaps so fine a gentleman as some noblemen we could name, he seems a most worthy person; to say nothing of the grandeur of Greta Castle, and all the rest of it. There is something unaccountable in the business!—I do think the Armytages are all a little odd; and as to *Mrs.* Armytage, the grand Seignior is a nobody to her!

"She is certainly very disagreeable," sighed Marian;—"but she has great qualities."

"Great?—give me good ones!" retorted her aunt. "What business has a woman with *great* qualities? Unless you could make a Lord Chancellor, an Archbishop of Canterbury, or a Commander-in-Chief of Mrs. Armytage, I don't see any use that her qualities could be put to! After all, Billy Pitt himself, if he had been born for petticoats, would have made nothing but a domineering, interfering woman of business!"

Marian was spared the trouble of defending her sex or her mother-in-law; a more agreeable occupation awaited her. The good aunt

and uncle had contrived a charming surprise for her; and her hopes, long deferred, of being once more clasped in the arms of her mother, were happily accomplished. Mrs. Baltimore, too tender of her child to be over-tender of herself, had found the York mail a sufficiently noble mode of conveyance to remit her to Marian; and with one of Jack's "young 'uns" on her knee, (a little curly-pated ruffian of five years old,) had made her way to join her husband at Tom Warley's, and *from* Tom Warley's the happy pair had now progressed to Scarborough. Such was Jack's mode of disposing of the first fruits of his winnings on the St. Leger.

Who now so happy as Mrs. Arthur Armytage!—Her father and mother gratified by the certainty that, if an uneasy daughter-in-law, she was the happiest of wives and mothers;—rich in troops of friends,—rich in admiring neighbours,—rich in the prospect of Holywell Park, and the possession of a noble set of diamonds; rich, above all, in her own old, former-day, affectionate, Baker-Street heart,—

and the certainty that little Harriet's first teeth were within a few days of their appearance!—Marian saw no tawdriness in her mother's taste;—no weakness in her over-indulgence of little Jack,—no coarseness—no vulgarity in the wit of Jack the elder—who, it was plain, would never become the old. He assured Mrs. Dyke, the Yorkshire air had made her so fat that she was looking "like a melon on a mile-stone;" and Mrs. Dyke took the personal joke with so good-humoured a laugh, that Marian saw no offence in it; he quizzed the little Robseyling into a belief that Arthur had undertaken to bring into Parliament a bill for a railroad between Colchester and Billingsgate, for the exclusive conveyance of "natives;" and Marian sat by unremonstrating. Her child on her knee, her little brother climbing on the back of her chair, kind friends—kind, loving, unfastidious friends around her, and from the windows a majestic prospect of the Bay of Scarborough,—what more could she possibly desire?

It was in the midst of these domestic pleasures, that there arrived a letter from Dr. Grant, overclouding in a moment the sunshine of her happiness. "I have to entreat," wrote the good pastor to Arthur Armytage, "that you will instantly set off for Holywell, in order to accompany me to Clifton. Miss Armytage is much worse; a fatal change has taken place; and even with the best speed you can use, I fear we must be still too late. I leave it to you and my friend Mrs. Arthur, whether, under such painful circumstances, it were not better that your wife should be spared the pain of witnessing sufferings which she cannot alleviate, more particularly as your mother writes to beg we will use the utmost despatch."

"Certainly—certainly—I should only retard your movements; lose not an hour, dearest Arthur!" cried Marian, her cheeks bathed with tears. "Much as I desire to see her again, I would not for worlds hazard the vexation to all parties of being an unwelcome visitor to Mrs. Armytage at such a moment. I perfectly

understand Dr. Grant. He is all kindness, all wisdom. Go! dearest, and help him to comfort *her*, or those who are left to mourn her."

And her husband hesitated not to obey. Within half an hour of the receipt of the letter, he was off; and Marian was left to her tears. "A fatal change!" and *she* had not been there to return to Sophy the thousand kind and womanly attentions she had received from her in her own hour of thrall. She had not been there to support the fainting head, to wipe away the tear of anguish. Sophia was alone with that haughty-minded mother, so unconversant with the woes of humanity; so unsympathizing with the frailties of a feeble nature. She hoped—she believed—she was sure that the sufferer wished for her; yet dared not intrude her company upon the mother of her dying sister.

On reaching Holywell, Arthur received further intelligence from Dr. Grant, calculated to obliterate every gleam of hope remaining.

Over-exerted by the fatigues of her journey Sophia had ruptured a blood-vessel, and now appeared in the last stage of debility; even Mrs. Armytage, so long and obstinately blind to her danger, despaired. Again and again, in the course of their progress from Holywell to Clifton, their hurried, hopeless journey, Arthur Armytage descanted to his friend on the afflicting probability that Sophia's life might have been preserved by timely removal to the South of France; and on the singularity that the child of parents so robust, should fall a sacrifice to what the French have aptly named a *maladie de langueur*. But Dr. Grant, however absorbed by interest for the dying, forebore to endanger the safety of the living. True to his trust, he said not a word of Rainsford's unworthiness, of Sophia's brokenness of heart. Only once, when Arthur, involuntarily clasping his hands, exclaimed, "Poor girl! poor precious sister! to die at twenty-one, without having experienced one day of perfect happiness! Oh! Dr. Grant! my mother, I fear, has

proved a bitter task-mistress to poor Sophia" —the good pastor could not but reply—"Mrs. Armytage may have been at times a harsh parent; but all blame rests not with her. My dear Arthur, the fate of this suffering angel affords a fearful lesson to us, to *us*, the fathers of daughters." But Arthur's senses were deadened by grief; and the unadvised allusion startled him not.

It was evening when they arrived at Clifton. "How I hate the very name of this place!" cried Arthur as they entered the town. For how many of the young, the good, and the beautiful, has its death-bell tolled! I have always dreaded the name of Clifton."

But, as they approached the house, Arthur would have found it difficult to give utterance even to this adjuration; nor could Dr. Grant exhort him as he wished: — he had only courage to breathe forth his hopes in prayer, —in prayer that the loved one might be yet alive. They stopped at the door. There were lights in the house. *Not* the fearful,

dim, steadfast light, proclaiming the watchers over the dead; but lights glaring from room to room. There was movement—there was *hope* within those walls!

With hasty yet careful footsteps, they entered the chamber to which, by the desire of Mrs. Armytage, they were instantly conducted; when a single glance at the already almost beatified countenance of the expiring Sophia, convinced them that the hope still remaining was at least not for this world. Forbidden by her medical attendants to converse, no power could repress the speaking expression of her face on beholding those she loved;—her beaming eye—her happy smile, proclaiming, more intelligibly than words,—"*Now* all is well—*now* I can die in peace,—*now* the one dark step is lightened for my trembling feet. I am satisfied."

Arthur spoke not. He contented himself with lifting from the coverlid her pale, waxen hand, and covering it with tears and kisses. But Dr. Grant approached nearer to the

pillow, and whispered such words of joy and comfort as those only who are accustomed to address the dying, are skilled to use. Though Sophia was speechless, he knew, from long experience, by what yearnings — what misgivings—the parting soul is perplexed,—*he* knew what thorns to remove, what rough places to make plain. And by the expression of mingled humility and confidence of perfect faith, — of perfect trust, — illumining the face of the dying, saw that he was heard and understood. Drawing her brother gently towards her, she imprinted a single kiss upon the forehead of the hand-in-hand companion of her youth, murmured a blessing on his child, took from her finger a ring she was in the habit of wearing, and while placing it on his own, faltered the name of his wife, and instructed him where to find a letter for Marian, to be delivered "when all was over."

The nurse interposing, reminded her of the interdiction of her physician. "I shall only transgress once more," she faintly murmured;

"let my last words be words of gratitude to my mother." They looked round, but Mrs. Armytage had disappeared. They had forgotten her. No one had missed her. Alas! it is only such a mother who, even for a moment, could pass unnoticed from the bed of a dying child!

CHAPTER VI.

And when the morning came, serene
And dim with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
A happier morn than ours!

T. Hood.

It was a night of deep and heartfelt agony to all. But there were no bursts of frantic emotion beside the death-bed of Sophia Armytage. Those who loved her knew that she must die,—and prayed not that her life might be prolonged. They prayed only that all human suffering might be spared her,—that the cup might pass away,—that Heaven would deal gently with one of its chosen ones whom it was calling to itself!

And their prayers were heard. The breath of the dying grew fainter, the eye more dim, the icy hand more cold. But no throb of

anguish seemed working within. Once only, towards morning, her mind seemed to wander; and, raising her head suddenly and wildly from her pillow, she exclaimed "Edgar!—Do not come to disturb me now,—do not—do not disturb me. I am content—I have forgiven you, Edgar! Do not disturb me."

Her brother started at the words, and a new light seemed to break upon his mind; but Mrs. Armytage covered her face with her hands, and groaned aloud. Dr. Grant, more self-possessed than either, kneeled down beside the sufferer, and, by the soothing sound of a prayer familiar to her ears,—a prayer for Divine support lest "for any pains of death the soul should fall from God," recalled the wandering spirit. Sophia never spoke again. A slight convulsion in the closed hands folded in prayer upon her breast, alone indicated the moment when her struggle was over, and Heaven was all in all!

The morning light was just struggling in upon them when that fatal movement became

manifest; and involuntarily all present fell on their knees and prayed, as if an angel were among them. But when, on rising from his devotions, the haggard eyes of Arthur rested on the fallen countenance,—the creature of clay—which alone remained to him of the kind, warm-hearted, fond, endearing sister,—the gentle friend,—the forbearing counsellor,—his feelings would no longer be controlled, and throwing himself on the bed beside her, he wept, and cried aloud—"Why was all this concealed from me; why was I not sent for; why was I not permitted to be near her? She wished for me, she wailed for me,—yet I was kept in ignorance of her condition! Her brother should have been with her from the first,—her brother would have comforted her. Sophia—my own Sophia!—Why did you suffer yourself to be removed from among us?"

Mrs. Armytage could not but hear the ejaculations of her son; but she answered not a word. The tears were sealed in her eyes,—the sorrow iced her heart; she seemed trans-

fixed to stone. Dr. Grant suggested that, after so many nights of watching, she should retire to rest; and she obeyed, as if conscious of the necessity. Yet when she had shut herself into her own apartment, her steps were heard pacing the floor: it was plain she could not rest.

Towards evening, when all had been disposed in order in the chamber of death,—the watch-lights placed,—the winding-sheet enshrouded round the frail attenuated form,—the sweet, sweet face enveloped in lawn less white than its own more than marble paleness,—Dr. Grant, aware that the bereaved mother slept not, and trusting to subdue the demon of restlessness by which she seemed possessed, by the influence of that touching spectacle, invited her to the mournful room. At first, she refused; but when called upon, in the name of Heaven, to come and listen beside the bed of death to the promises of the gospel unto such as die the death of the just, she could not but obey. She followed him mechanically,—me-

chanically listened to his words. He saw with pain that they reached not her heart; but at such a moment, how could such a man conceive that she had hardened it while listening to the involuntary reproaches of her son?

And soon, other arrangements,—those importunate forms which come so inopportunely to harass the house of mourning, required attention. It was necessary for directions to be issued; yet Arthur dared not spare his mother the painful task of exercising her authority.

"Let every thing be done in the most liberal manner,"—was her reply to the interrogations of Dr. Grant. "Let every outward respect be paid. I wish my daughter to be buried with her family at Holywell."

But the good pastor, averse to the pomps of death as to the pomps of life, suggested that Miss Armytage might perhaps have expressed wishes of her own on such a subject;—"that she might have left a will."

"She had no will but mine!"—was the too fatally true rejoinder of Mrs. Armytage.

"Still, as she had recently attained her majority"—Dr. Grant began.

"Search, if you will,"—hastily interrupted Mrs. Armytage, amazed that, for the first time, the power of volition should be attributed to her departed child. "I own it will surprise me if—but no matter. Let her desk be opened in my presence."

And the first thing that presented itself *was* a will,—placed so as if intended to meet their immediate search; dated several months back, and proving that, from the first, Sophia had foreseen the fatal issue of her illness. Instead of requiring "every outward respect to be paid to her remains," *she* made it an especial request that all might be done in the simplest manner consistent with propriety; that she might be laid in the church wherein she had been accustomed through life to worship God, —(*she* thought not of it, as of the burying-place of her ancestors) and borne to the grave by the poor of her mother's village.—Yes! even in that melancholy page, she forgot

not to designate Holywell as her "*mother's* village!"

Her fortune was bequeathed to her little niece, with the reserve of one third, disposed of in legacies to her *protégées*, the Grants, to her old nurse, to her personal attendants. To her mother she bequeathed her thanks,—those thanks which Mrs. Armytage had not been present to gather from her dying lips: for what gift or treasure else was there to offer to the fortune-laden mistress of Holywell? Yet even that bequest was qualified by a touching petition, that she would be kind to Arthur and Marian. "They are now your only children," was the form of the entreaty. "Give them not only your protection, but your love and confidence; for you know not, dearest mother, how it freezes the heart to know that one is cared for as a duty, not cherished as a delight. Love them, mother, for they are deserving your utmost affection."

"My young friend was evidently unaware," observed Dr. Grant, as with a subdued voice

he recited aloud the terms of the will of which himself and Arthur were named executors, "that this instrument, intended for the perusal of her family alone, must be publicly enregistered, to secure its validity."

And again Mrs. Armytage hardened her heart. She was not only to be admonished by her children; but their counsels were to become subject for the commentary of every clerk in Doctors' Commons.

"It seems I have no further instructions to give, no further wishes to express," said she, rising with frigid mien to quit the room. "I am ready, meanwhile, to obey the summons of my daughter's executors, whenever they have made their arrangements."

And from that day till the morning on which the funeral cavalcade quitted Clifton, she did not leave her chamber or admit Arthur to her presence. Her son was shocked when she issued forth at last in her mother's mourning, on the appointed day, to see what ravages emotion had made in her appearance,—the

rigidity of her features, the pallor of her complexion; but Dr. Grant was far more shocked to witness her impenetrability of spirit; to see that she grieved with the pride of a stoic, not with the humble-mindedness of a Christian! Now was not the moment, however, to reprove her, when she was following the body of her child to the grave. But he felt that a time must come when it would be his duty to wrestle with the unamended hardness of her heart.

It was at once an afflicting and a cheering sight, to behold that funeral procession, with its nodding plumes and flowing scarfs of white, —white as the purity of her it served to convey to the dust—enter the village of Holywell. The road was strewed with flowers: every garden far and near had been despoiled to do the last honours to one who had not left behind her the memory of a good action neglected, *a single unkind word, a single look of harshness!* Every window, every door in the village, was closed, the business of life suspended; the plough was still in the fields, the sheep-boy's song on the

hills; young and old, in one mighty yet silent and reverential throng, were assembled in the ancient avenue, to see the bier of the only daughter of the house of Holywell borne forth on the shoulders of the elders of the village. Saving the stifled sobs of the poor, not a sound was heard, till Dr. Grant, with his head bowed down with irrepressible grief, came forth from the church portals to welcome the dead, in those words of Christian exultation that seem to speak as with a voice from the grave. Every seat was already filled, when the body was borne into the aisle. The Rotherham family, in mourning as for a child of their own, were weeping apart; and Lord Greta, who had come down from London to pay the last homage to the object of his unavailing affections, stood folded in his cloak, pale as an image of despair. Supporting Arthur on his arm as they stood together at the mouth of the vault, when the dust was shaken on the hollow coffin of her they loved, it had been difficult to

determine which were the nearer kinsman, the deeper mourner.

It had been the express desire of Mrs. Armytage, that Marian should not be summoned from Scarborough to attend the funeral; and her wishes, even if unreasonable, were at such a moment to be implicitly obeyed. It was also her desire, that her son, immediately after the ceremony, should proceed to join his family; and Arthur, perceiving his mother had set her heart on being alone at Holywell, in order, as he concluded, to feed her affliction, or soothe it by reminiscences of her lost child, would not remonstrate. But he felt too harassed, too overwhelmed, to proceed at once on his journey; and readily accepted the affectionate proposal of the Rotherhams, made through Dr. Grant, that he should pass a day at Greta Castle, to recover his strength and self-possession. No explanation was due to Mrs. Armytage. Having taken an affectionate leave of her, he proceeded to the roof of those

who, if they loved him not better, treated him at least with more of parental tenderness than his mother.

But Arthur had chosen ill for his happiness. On certain subjects Marian's affectionate lips were sealed even towards her husband. She would have said nothing to him reflecting on his mother's disposition. But Lady Laura's impetuous character could not be controlled. Stung to the soul by the loss of that beloved friend whom she had trusted would in the end become her sister,—by the agony of the brother whom she loved and honoured, and who, unable to bear even the society of his family at such a time, had returned from the church door to town,—she spoke out: upbraided the peremptory temper of Mrs. Armytage as having silenced the complaints and stifled the confidence of Sophia: upbraided the despotic dealing which had bowed so frail a flower to the dust. The entreaties of Lord and Lady Rotherham could not silence the outpouring of her grief. She felt that her friend

had been sacrificed: she said so; she would not recant. Many months before, Sophia had admitted her earnest desire to quit Holywell "for change of air and scene, 'ere it was too late;" but only a few weeks since, only since her arrival at Clifton, she had written confidentially to her friend,—"I am dying!—dying of *misery*. The iron has entered into my soul; and all the exertions I feel it my duty to make, avail not to heal the wound. I am lonely here, and most unhappy; but I dare not write to my dearest brother. I dread being moved to say something that might excite his feelings against my mother. For my sake, when I am gone, be kind to him; and as good and true a friend to Marian Armytage as you have ever been to me."

With what bitter tears were these lines, traced by the weak, faltering hand of his dying sister, shaped by Arthur. He began to fear that some mystery had been concealed from him. He dared not inquire—he dared

not conjecture. He dreaded lest some unforseen discovery should prompt him to act harshly towards his mother; for she was too much in his power not to have the utmost claim on his generosity and forbearance.

CHAPTER VII.

She's such that were I well assured she came
Of noble kind and noble stock, I'd wish
No better choice, and think me rarely wed.
Did'st thou not say she came from good descending?

PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE.

THE scene at Scarborough, meanwhile, was far from uneventful. Five days of suspense had necessarily followed the departure of Arthur, without affording more than the intelligence, communicated in a few hurried lines, written on joining Dr. Grant at Holywell, to dispel the anxieties of Marian; and, depressed as she was in spirits, not all the invitations of the Duchess—not all the importunities of the daughters—could induce her to join the diversions of the Spalding party. It is true that Lord Wildingham, who had made his appearance, according to Arthur's prediction, an altered man, and, apparently, a better and

a wiser, made daily visits to the house of Mrs. Robsey; but, evidently, less for the pleasure of talking *to* Mrs. Arthur Armytage than *of* Rosamond Devonport. Marian had witnessed their first, strange interview, and the singular influence the child of the woods had exercised over the feelings of the man of the world. Marian greatly and justly admired the beauty and naïveté of Rosamond; and above all, Marian's kind and gentle disposition rendered her a patient auditress of the troubles of all her friends; even although, as now, engrossed by afflictions of her own. Lord Wildingham, she discovered, had already found time to re-visit the Grange, but without success. Access had been denied him, on the plea that Miss Margaret was seriously indisposed; and his only consolation lay in the surly announcement of the old serving-man, that "there was no use in coming again, as the family would be away in a few days to Scarborough."

On this hint, his Lordship spoke not, but immediately set off to join his family; nor did

it require incentive less powerful than the hope of acquaintanceship with the Maranham family to determine him to confront the manœuvres of the Duchess, who, at a distance from her thousand-and-one home avocations and schemings, would doubtless devote to the disposal of *his* time, money, interest, and, perhaps, affections, the whole of her own idleness and genius for intrigue. For Wyndham was, for the nonce, the darling one of her children; even Lord Downham, as a mere proprietor-expectant, had sunk into comparative insignificance. But all this, and more, he would have braved for the chance of an interview with a being so fair and bright and pure as Rose—a being so wholly dissimilar from those with whom, for many years past, he had been in habits of association.

His projects prospered less than might have been expected. Miss Margaret's indisposition was apparently of a very serious nature, for no visits were received by the Maranham family; and Rosamond might as well have

been immured in the nunnery at York, so rarely was she descried by those on the watch for her appearance.

One day, however, about a week after the departure of Arthur Armytage, Marian having been persuaded by her mother and aunt to accompany them with her nurse and child in their morning's walk, Lord Wildingham begged permission to join the family party. They accordingly ascended the Castle-hill together; and seated themselves on one of the green mounds of its ancient fortifications, to enjoy the freshness of the sea-breeze, and the diversified aspect of the ocean with its little squadron of fishing-boats, and distant and scarcely defined sails, vanishing towards the Northern Seas. A Leith steam-vessel, anchored within a mile or two of the shore, from which a boat full of passengers was rapidly rowing to land, was engrossing their attention and speculations; when suddenly the shrill tones of a discordant female voice startled them from their observations, and

Lord Wildingham started to his feet, and stood hat in hand,—when, passing between them and the edge of the cliff, appeared the gaunt and epicœne presence of Di Maranham, apparently occupied in bestowing a lecture of no ordinary severity on the lovely girl gliding patiently and submissively by her side.

Mrs. Arthur Armytage, aware of the importance attached by Lord Wildingham to the pacification of her involuntary feud with the family at the Grange, rose from her seat, and approaching the weird woman, courteously accosted her with the kindest inquiries after her invalid sister; and communicated, unasked, the particulars of her last afflicting intelligence from Clifton. But Mistress Di was unappeasable. Readily perceiving that while Marian was engaging her attention, Lord Wildingham had seized the opportunity to commence a conversation with Rosamond, she uttered her replies in her gruffest and most unconciliatory tone, so as to render im-

possible the prolongation of the interview; and, having seized the arm of Rose, bade good morning both to his lordship and Mrs. Arthur Armytage, with an air that seemed to bid them avaunt and quit her presence.

"And who, in the name of mercy, is that masculine-looking woman?" cried Mrs. Robsey, when her niece and Lord Wildingham returned to their seats.

"One of our Holywell neighbours," replied Marian, somewhat disconcerted.

"I shall begin to think that all the old women in Yorkshire are rude and overbearing!" resumed Mrs. Robsey. "This person is almost as abominable as Mrs. Armytage. Pray, my dear, does she consider herself a lady?"

"She is the daughter of the late Sir Wolstan Maranham, and of one of the most ancient families in the county," answered Marian, more sorry for Lord Wildingham's disappointment, than indignant against Mrs. Di.

"Of whom?" exclaimed her mother; "Of Sir Wolstan who?"

"Sir Wolstan Maranham. He has been dead for many years; and his daughters succeed him in all but the baronetcy."

"Sir Wolstan Maranham! Are you *quite* sure?" reiterated Mrs. Robsey.

"Quite sure. He was an intimate friend of the Armytage family."

"And his daughters, did you say? How many did he leave? Is one of them named Margaret?"

"He left three, I fancy; and one of them *is* named Margaret. She is a great invalid."

"But the young lady who passed us just now, cannot be one of the sisters, my dear Marian?" inquired Mrs. Baltimore.

"No! she is only their ward."

"And how old?"

"About eighteen, I fancy;—eighteen or nineteen."

"About eighteen or nineteen?" persisted

Mrs. Baltimore, addressing her sister. "And it all occurred when Marian was about three years old. As sure as fate, Harriet, it is his child!"

"Whose child?" eagerly inquired Mrs. Arthur in her turn. But neither of them answered her question; although Lord Wildingham, who was lending an attentive ear to all that passed, looked even more inquisitive than herself.

"Did you notice her? Was she pretty,—was she at all like the family?" inquired Mrs. Robsey, addressing Mrs. Baltimore.

"Decidedly. The first thing that struck me in the young lady was, that she resembled Marian before her marriage."

"And so she does!" cried Lord Wildingham. "There has always been something in Miss Devonport which perplexed me. I see it now;—it is her likeness to Mrs. Arthur Armytage. How very singular!"

"Not singular at all, if our suspicions are

well founded," said Mrs. Baltimore incautiously. "I wish we could make it out."

"Make out *what*, dear Mamma?" cried Marian. "Do you, perchance, know any thing of Rosamond's birth and parentage? It appears to be an enigma in Yorkshire."

"Ah! poor child!" ejaculated Mrs. Robsey. "I wish I had noticed her more closely,—I have always so longed to see her!"

"And you say that all the sisters Maranham are still alive,—and that one of them is a great invalid?" resumed Mrs. Baltimore, addressing Marian.

"Yes! Miss Margaret, who is a sort of hypochondriac, has not quitted the Grange for many years."

"She has lately, however, been dangerously ill," added Lord Wildingham, with undisguised interest in the subject; "and is now at Scarborough for her health."

"That must certainly be the one!" cried Mrs. Robsey and her sister, at the same moment.

"My dear aunt,—my dear mother, you seem bent on exciting our curiosity!" cried Marian, still more and more perplexed.

"Pray, my dear," enquired Mrs. Robsey, without noticing her exclamation, "do you think by any chance it ever reached this poor creature's ears that you were related to the O'Moran family?"

"I should imagine not," said Mrs. Arthur, musing for a moment.

"My dear Mrs. Armytage, reflect for a moment!" rejoined Lord Wildingham. "Have you forgotten our unlucky visit from Spalding Court? Have you forgotten the affair of Lady Emily Maclaren?"

"True!—now you remind me of it,—they certainly *must* be aware of the relationship. Yes, dear aunt, one day, in a foolish jest, I introduced a person to the family at the Grange, (Lady Emily Maclaren, to whom you took so great a fancy at the races, and who did not wish her real name to be known,) as my aunt, Lady O'Moran."

"You introduced her under that name to the Maranhams? And how did they take it? what in the world did they say?"

"They neither spoke to nor looked at either of us; and from that time there has been a complete coolness between us, as you may have perceived just now."

"I am sure I am not surprised," said Mrs. Baltimore. "Poor thing! They must have thought you intended to put an affront upon them. But how were you to know anything about the matter?"

"How am I ever to learn, unless you explain it to me? What *does* all this mystery mean? What can you know,—what can you have ever known, about persons living so remote from your own sphere, as these old ladies?"

"Remote enough of late years, I fancy; which is the reason we have been so completely in the dark respecting them, and more particularly respecting the poor girl. But I declare, Harriet," cried Mrs. Baltimore, sud-

denly addressing her sister, " I have a vast mind to write to my brother Dominick, who has all the papers, and knows all the rights and wrongs of the case, to ascertain whether the age of the poor babe tallies, and so forth. And it will all be very convenient; for Lord Ballinà never leaves the castle before Christmas, and so I can just put the letter under cover to him. Dominick is not fond of paying postage; (how should he, with his large family?) and I am sure I don't often trouble him! I have written but once since I had to announce Marian's marriage. Have you heard from my brother lately, Harriet?"

" I generally get a letter once in a twelvemonth," answered Mrs. Robsey, without the smallest compassion on Marian's or Lord Wildingham's baffled curiosity, " to acquaint me with the birth of another child, and that his wife is doing well, and so forth. How many has he now? Twelve or thirteen, I think!"

" Lord, my dear, how you talk! You forget

the twins, that were born the same time as my little Tom! *Fifteen,* to be sure! Seven boys and eight girls!"

"What a family," sighed Mrs. Dyke; "and all brought up, and doing well on less than five hundred a-year."

"It is a shame that Lord Ballinà has never raised his salary," added Mrs. Baltimore. "Only four hundred a-year for one of the most difficult agencies in Ireland!—"

"Where his parlour window is fired into as often as two or three times in a winter! Poor fellow!"

"And his turf-stack pulled down every week, poor soul!"

"But what has my uncle Dominick to do with Miss Devonport?" interrupted Marian, unable properly to interest herself in these momentous family details. What does he know about Margaret Maranham?"

"Hush, my love! you must on no account talk about it!" ejaculated her mother, in a mysterious voice.

"You know, my dear Marian, I never so much as mentioned the subject to you in all the time we used to pass together," added her aunt, in an equally oracular tone.

"But *pray* mention it *now!*" cried Marian: "you cannot think how much you have excited my curiosity;—you do not know how warmly Miss Davenport has always interested my feelings!"

"How strangely things of that kind sometimes fall out,—eh, sister?" cried her mother to Mrs. Robsey. "To think, now, that Marian, of all people in the world, should be the one to find out that poor child, and to point her out to our notice?"

"Extraordinary indeed!" replied Mrs. Robsey.

"For Heaven's sake and mine," whispered Lord Wildingham to Mrs. Arthur Armytage, "persuade them to explain themselves."

"Pray, dearest mamma," exclaimed Marian; *pray* take pity on our curiosity. Indeed you may rely on my discretion!"

"Another time, my love—another time," re-

plied Mrs. Baltimore; adding, in a mysterious whisper, "it would not be proper to enter into a discussion of such a subject before a stranger."

"And now," cried Mrs. Robsey, rising from her seat, "we must be making the best of our way homewards. Poor dear Dyke will be wanting his luncheon; and unless I am there, to mix his Madeira and water, he eats nothing."

Do not allow them to drop the subject," said Lord Wildingham to Marian, as they descended the hill together. "Pray remember that I rely upon you for the *éclaircissement* of a thousand doubts and difficulties. I will call upon you at an early hour to-morrow. By that time you will have managed to obtain some explanation?"

"I hope so," was her reply. "Believe me, I am as much interested in the subject as yourself."

"I rather think not," replied Lord Wildingham, smiling significantly; "but I have all possible reliance on your good nature."

CHAPTER XI.

Les circonstances ne font rien ;—le caractère fait tout.
BENJAMIN CONSTANT.

BUT Marian's thoughts and cares were about to be diverted into a very different channel. On their arrival at home, instead of interesting herself in the state of Mr. Dyke Robsey's appetite, her attention was arrested by a letter lying on her table, in Arthur's handwriting; a letter with a black seal, announcing his own wretchedness and their mutual bereavement. Sophia was gone from them for ever!

And this was Marian's first familiarization with the pangs arising from such a state! Hitherto her happy circle of family affections had remained sacred and unbroken; she knew not of death or of the grave, save as the general doom, the eventual and far-off sentence of

frail mortality. But the lesson—the fearful home-withering knowledge—was come at last; and the dearest and best,—the young and fairest was the first to be called away. She should see *her* no more, from whose lips she had culled precepts of wisdom, words of consolation. That voice was silenced for ever, whose soft endearments had seemed to render the lofty chambers of Holywell less dreary; and the one flower,—the one frail flower which had ventured to spring beneath the inauspicious influence of the frowns of Mrs. Armytage, was withered into nothingness. All henceforth was desolation in the prospect! The mild mediator was departed. Little Harriet had lost her gentle champion, Arthur his pacificator, Marian her friend. What wonder that her tears should fall,—for her child—for her husband—for herself!

Her kindly-natured companions were far from jealous of her grief. Right well did they understand that their Marian must be deeply touched by her own and her husband's loss.

They even mourned, themselves, that one so good and unoffending should have been so early called away; one who had been a friend to their dear girl in troubles of her own; one who had won even the rough heart and careless eye of Jack Baltimore, by her courtesy of nature. Poor Sophia Armytage—*who* did not mourn for her?—*Who* did not feel that in her they had lost a friend?

Arthur's letter, written under all the heart-rending poignancy of his first bursts of grief, contained little more than the intelligence of his sister's death. The following day brought particulars; the day again following, an admission of his discontents against his mother; his dissatisfaction that he had not been earlier summoned,—his belief that Sophia had been harshly dealt with. At first, he had announced to Marian that the funeral would take place at Holywell, and begged her to hold herself in readiness to join them there, as it was his desire that his wife should pay the last respect of following his sister's remains to the grave—

a desire in which Marian heartily acquiesced. But he was soon forced to inform her that Mrs. Armytage decreed it otherwise, and that she had even expressed a positive interdiction.

"Well, never mind, my dear child,—do not cry, and never mind!"—expostulated her mother and aunt. "Let us forgive her for thwarting you in this particular; since she has condescended to consent that you should pass the winter with us in town." And Marian *did* suspend her tears; for her last letters from Arthur conveyed the intelligence that, immediately after the melancholy ceremony at Holywell, he would rejoin her at Scarborough.

But when he made his appearance, how unlike his former self! Haggard, broken-hearted, haunted by agonizing reminiscences, and above all, by the painful conviction, that he had not sufficiently interfered to screen his patient, submissive sister, from the despotism of his mother, Arthur could not forgive himself. His feelings became now for the first time really

embittered against Mrs. Armytage. All that Lady Laura had betrayed or urged, produced a fearful effect in his bosom. All that he knew, all that he apprehended of his mother's undue control over the destinies of Sophia—of Sophia, her victim,—of Sophia, whom her imperious egotism had consigned to the grave,—filled him with horror and disgust. The Robseys and Baltimores had prepared themselves to find him dejected and unhappy; they were almost terrified to see him so fearfully excited. But warm-hearted people as they were, not one of them but entered kindly and affectionately into his feelings.

How much more, then, into those of their dear Marian, on perusing that last farewell letter, traced by Sophia Armytage with a faltering, feeble, dying hand; replete with the kindest instructions, the fondest care for her happiness, the most yearning tenderness for her little nieces; with indistinct allusions to the arbitrary temper of her mother, and to the necessity that those over whose destinies she

exercised an influence, should not only study her varying humours, but keep in view that they were secondary to the suggestions of a strong mind governed by conscientious motives. She *implored* Marian to be indulgent and forbearing with Mrs. Armytage; to be unto her as a daughter; to be unto her—alas! as *she* had ever been.

Again she entreated her,—and with what affectionate and sisterly warmth,—to put her whole trust and confidence in Lady Laura Greta; explaining in fullest detail the position of her friend relative to Arthur, and appealing to her own good sense and womanly feeling, whether it were kind, whether it were *delicate,* to resent against Lord Rotherham's daughter a boyish preference, long since merged in the tenderest affection for herself? Sophia did not even forget to notice in that last and most melancholy page, the ungraciousness testified by her mother towards the family of Marian. She prayed them to be merciful. She prayed them to be clement; and to forbear from im-

pressing hereafter on the minds of Arthur's children, their own feelings of resentment against Mrs. Armytage!

Who could resist such an appeal, coming as it did from the cold hand of the newly dead, from the warm heart of Sophia Armytage? Her mother alone, perhaps, might have received it in haughty silence; but the tears of Marian and of her family fell fast; and with all their hearts and souls did they sympathize in the grief of Arthur on the loss of such a sister, and promise to fulfil to their utmost, to their very utmost, the injunctions which the dying angel had deigned to unfold. Jack Baltimore was away, to Newcastle races, or a Leith November meeting, or the Fates and the Jockey Club knew where; but his wife and the Robseys promised and vowed, in his name and their own, that whenever henceforth they felt inclined to resent the vagaries and insolence of the overbearing Mrs. Armytage, they would think upon her mild, considerate daughter, and forbear.

Meanwhile the depression of Arthur's spirits was such, as to alienate both Marian and himself from intercourse with their most intimate acquaintances; Arthur, wholly absorbed in his own sorrows—Marian, in those of Arthur. Nor would even the Robseys hear of admitting visitors under such painful circumstances. No exception was made in favour of Lord Wildingham or the Spaldings; the little family party remained mournful and apart. Already too, they were preparing for their departure from Scarborough. The middle of November had arrived; sea-fogs had enveloped the Castle Hill; the town was growing gloomy; the Yorkshire families belonging to hunting neighbourhoods, were gradually dispersing; and above all, Parliament was about to assemble for a fortnight's despatch of business, previous to the holidays.

Now the meeting of Parliament, even for the ceremony of prorogation, was the dear delight of poor little Jacob Dyke Robsey's existence. Not the finest first day's sport of

the hunting season, the noblest burst, the most famous run, was to the keenest sportsman half so inebriating a pleasure, as to him the sight of the Black Rod summoning his Majesty's Lower House to the bar and presence of the throne. On the present occasion, too, the joy of his prospects was doubled; for Arthur Armytage and his wife had promised to accompany them to London, share his parliamentary feasts, and even become inmates of his house in Portland Place. For Arthur was too hurt at heart to be sensitive to the yoke of conventional thraldom. He had neither thought nor care for the vulgarity or impropriety of Marian's relations; and even had he found leisure to regret the occasional flaming forth of their original sin, had too much confidence in his wife's amended knowledge of the world, and acquired self-possession, to apprehend that she would either commit herself, or stand committed, by the folly and ignorance of other people.

In forming these plans, moreover, he be-

lieved himself to be strictly fulfilling the wishes of his mother. Mrs. Armytage had said nothing, had hinted nothing, to unsay or unhint her original expression that she "concluded" her daughter-in-law would pass the winter with her family; and Arthur and Marian did not dream of gainsaying her implied opinion. They felt at liberty to dispose of themselves; and rejoiced that they had found so agreeable an opportunity of employing their disengaged time.

But these illusions were too agreeable to last. Three days previously to their intended departure for town, arrived a letter from Dr. Grant, stating that Mrs. Armytage was evidently impatient of their prolonged absence; that, although she had judged it unnecessary to proclaim her change of views, it was clear she expected that Arthur and his wife would pass the winter with her at Holywell. "Your mother has suffered severely, though silently, in health," wrote the good man, "and is greatly changed in appearance. It is not

good for her to be alone; it would be unkind, my dear Arthur, were you to visit upon her, at the present juncture, any dissatisfaction you may even justly entertain. Take pity, then, on her infirmities of disposition; send your wife and child quickly to bear her company; and as soon as parliament is prorogued, come among us again, forgiving and affectionate as ever. If you feel inclined to be resentful, reflect for a moment upon the void created in my poor friend's existence by the loss of such a daughter; and I am convinced you will not hesitate to do your full part for her consolement."

Nevertheless, Arthur *did* hesitate. The thought of again inhabiting Holywell sickened him to the soul; nor could he reconcile himself to the idea of inflicting so severe a disappointment upon his patient wife. But Marian was the first to urge him to compliance with the request of Dr. Grant; and put forward his mother's claims in so strong and sacred a light, that resistance was impossible.

Appealing to him in the name of Sophia, she cited the words of his dying sister's letter, to soften his heart towards one, whose own heart, alas! remained unsoftened alike by prosperity and adversity, by tenderness or bereavement.

And now, strange as it appeared to people so straightforward as the Baltimore tribe, there remained the difficulty of announcing their intentions to Mrs. Armytage,—the difficulty of announcing that they had resigned their own projects, and thwarted their own inclinations, solely with a view to her comfort! For it was felt to be a difficulty!—She was a woman to whom it was not at all times possible to concede even her own will; unless the compliant could be assured that the *mode* of the concession was exactly to her taste. From Dr. Grant, therefore, Arthur exacted the kindness that he would acquaint his mother with their intention to revisit Holywell, whenever their presence was likely to be agreeable to her feelings.

For once, the answer was prompt and rational. She wrote in her own name, and with her own hand, to assure them that they could not return too soon. Solitude had, perhaps, rendered Mrs. Armytage more reasonable. She wished them to be with her, and owned it cordially. She even alluded, and for the first time with a semblance of real kindness, to their little girl; made many inquiries after her grandchild, and expressed a desire to see it once more at Holywell.

All this was better than Arthur had expected at her hands; and he began to rejoice at the resolution he had taken, and to feel grateful to Dr. Grant for his interposition. Marian and her relations consoled themselves with the certainty that she was doing no more than what was right by her mother-in-law,—no more than they should have exacted under similar circumstances; and a promise was interchanged among them that her visit to town should only be deferred till the spring. Eager to be at Holywell so as to admit of

Arthur's passing a whole day with his mother, previously to setting off to rejoin the Robseys, Marian was compelled to quit Scarborough without even a farewell interview with the Spalding family. She knew from the gossiping of her mother and aunt, that they were still there, grievously disappointed by the absence of the Duke of Wetherby and the Lomax Marscourts (the latter of whom were reported by the newspapers to be figuring in great splendour at Brighton); while Lord Wildingham was said to be off to Melton, and the Maranhams, hopeless of relief for their invalid—to the Grange. Mrs. Dyke, with all her predilection for bathing-places, was forced to admit that Scarborough was empty, cold, and disagreeable; and the moment the travelling carriage of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Armytage drove from the door, was quite ready to enter her own, and take her departure with little Jacob, her sister, and her sister's little Jack, for what the York paper described as her "splendid mansion in Portland Place."

CHAPTER XII.

> Raw damps
> With flagging wings fly heavily about,
> Scattering their pestilential colds and rheums
> Through all the lazy air.
>
> DRYDEN.

GLOOMY as had been their anticipations of the aspect of Holywell, in its altered state, experience could alone render Arthur and his wife fully sensible of the miserable change wrought there by the loss of Sophia. The inauspicious season of the year, the cheerlessness of the weather, contrasted with the cordiality of the affectionate noisy family circle they had quitted, all conspired to impart a more than usually desolate appearance to the place. Mrs. Armytage was looking extremely ill, was silent, sad: no longer imperious, no longer overbearing; but broken in mind and body, a shadow of her former self.

And all this became doubly apparent to Marian, when, after a few days, Arthur was under the necessity of quitting her for town. She could scarcely bear to find herself alone with Mrs. Armytage, the gloom of whose countenance was enhanced by the deepness of her mourning, and the impenetrability of her silence; and when she took refuge in her own apartment from the stillness of the drawing-room, the very echo of her own footsteps along the now deserted corridors, filled her with nervous dread. What a change had been effected in the house within the last eight months! Oppressive as she had found its stateliness on her first introduction, how much more overpowering to her feelings was its present torpor of death-like tranquillity!

Nor was there a single subject on which she could, with pleasure or propriety, enter into conversation with her companion. The past was an interdicted theme,—the past with its reminiscences of *her* whose absence engrossed the thoughts of both. Clifton must not be

named; her visit to Scarborough, connected with her own family and that of Spalding, must also be buried in oblivion. Marian scarcely even ventured to repeat the daily intelligence contained in Arthur's letters, involving, as it necessarily did, the names of Robsey and Baltimore; and often did she sit, hour after hour, in a melancholy *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Armytage, not daring to evoke the sound of music in those rooms now consecrated by the memory of Sophia, not daring to arouse the infant laughter of her child; but weary of her work, weary of her book, weary of the leaden aspect of a November sky; and counting the hours by every tedious quarter chimed by the gorgeous pendule decorating the silent chamber. Such is the monotony of an existence uncheered by the blessings of confidential intercourse!

Among Marian's causes of discontent, too, existed one, which she could scarcely reconcile to her own belief. The affectionate frankness of her dying sister's letter had opened her eyes

to the absurdity, the want of generosity, the self-committal, included in her jealousy of Lady Laura Greta; and determined her to spare no effort in establishing a lasting friendship with the family so dear to the heart and precious to the esteem of Sophia Armytage. She felt that she had wrongs to atone towards them; and, with her characteristic candour, longed to commence her course of expiation, and prove herself worthy of their better opinion. But it was impossible for any explanation to take place in the chilling presence of Mrs. Armytage; who seemed to have made up her mind that Marian and Lady Laura should never meet alone. Perhaps she dreaded that a better understanding should commence between them; perhaps she was desirous that her daughter-in-law should form no independent friendships; for whenever Mrs. Arthur proposed a drive to Greta Castle (and such a measure without the cognizance of the lady of Holywell was wholly impossible) she too found herself under the necessity of paying a visit to

Lady Rotherham, and never for a moment did she quit the room when these visits were returned by any member of the Greta family.

Marian's health soon began to sink under this oppressive thraldom of mind and body; and having again the prospect of becoming a mother, (a prospect which, aware of her former troublesome anxieties, she was careful to withhold from the knowledge of Mrs. Armytage,) she denied herself the pleasure of solitary excursions on horseback, and found her sole relief from the tediousness of home, in rambling through Holywell park, sometimes accompanied by little Harriet and her nurse, sometimes alone. As often as she dared, she extended her walk into the village; striving to fill, as best she might, towards the sick and needy, the place of the gentle benefactress they had lost.

It was on returning one morning from an expedition of this laudable nature that she was overtaken by Lord Wildingham; who,

giving his horse to his servant, instantly and joyfully offered her his arm.

"How fortunate I am to have met you!" was his first exclamation. "I was making my way to Holywell with the certainty of being refused admittance; for I find no visits are received there at present, except from the Rotherham family. No words can describe how anxious I have been to see you again!"

"Mrs. Armytage is not equal to seeing company," replied Marian. "She is greatly overcome by her loss."

"Natural enough!" rejoined Lord Wildingham. "Having persecuted her poor daughter to death, it is but just that her conscience should supply those pangs which the heart of any other mother would naturally experience. But I will not accuse her now, poor woman, since her day of atonement is come! Tell me, do you hear frequently from Arthur? and what does he tell you of himself, and what of your family? They are all well, I hope?"

"Quite well."

"And the affairs of the nation?—'Well, too,' as says the Thane of Rosse?"

"I seldom trouble myself with the affairs of the nation: there are so many wiser heads than mine devoted to their administration."

"Wherein you show your own to be the wisest. It may therefore be news to you that our unruly kernes of Ireland are likely to tax the legislative wisdom of such Solons as mine uncle of Robsey, for four weeks instead of two. Parliament will not be up, in short, till the very eve of the holidays."

"You do not say so! *Three* weeks longer! How *shall* I get through three more weeks with Mrs. Armytage!" ejaculated Marian.

"A trying ordeal of patience, I must admit. Guess, then, what I must have been undergoing, in the last four weeks of suspense!"

"Suspense!"

"Have you forgot the eventful day on which we parted at Scarborough?"

"Eventful, indeed!" cried Marian. "The

day on which those fatal tidings reached me from Clifton!"

"Do justice, at least, to my forbearance," resumed her companion; "that, being aware how sincere must be your affliction, how different from the self-upbraidings of Mrs. Armytage,—I have forborne to intrude upon you with distresses of my own. You must surely recollect that you promised to obtain for me from your family, some explanation of their mysterious allusions to the parentage of Rosamond Devonport?"

"I do, indeed!—and have to accuse my selfishness in having so ill fulfilled my commission. But you know not how completely my attention was absorbed at Scarborough by poor Arthur's misery."

"I can readily understand it. But are you still absolutely in the dark? Do you know *nothing* further on the subject?"

"Nothing of any interest. Once, when the departure of the Maranhams from Scarborough was mentioned in my mother's presence, I

alluded to her former observations. But Arthur was sitting between us at the time; and she made signs to me to forbear the inquiry. It is evidently connected in some way or other with our family affairs, and in a manner she seems to think discreditable."

"How strange!—how perplexing!" ejaculated Lord Wildingham.

"And have *you* gained no tidings?" inquired Marian.

"None, or worse than none!" was his reply. "From you, who have been from the first my confidante, I will withhold nothing: I am persuaded I may trust to your discretion."

"Indeed you may. Besides," continued Marian with a melancholy smile, "unless I were to whisper your secrets to the reeds of the Wharfe, to whom could I possibly unfold them here at dull, solitary Holywell?"

"I may as well own, then, at once, that I have referred myself for explanation to my father,—Mrs. Di Maranham having frequently

and mysteriously alluded to the Duke in my presence as somehow or other interested in their family affairs."

"The Duke of Spalding? And did he make the same admission?"

"He seemed startled by my allusions to the subject. But *that* he would have been under any circumstances; for my mother has managed to break up so completely all habits of intercourse between him and his children, that he was as much surprised to find himself addressed by one of us concerning any thing more interesting than the state of the weather, as if an ox had spoken. I was even forced to avow the motive of my interest, in the mysteries of the Grange, by way of apology for my familiarity."

"And had your confession a happy influence?"

"By no means. My father asked me in plain terms whether it was my intention to offer my hand to Miss Devonport; and on hearing my affirmative, coolly expressed his

positive interdiction, and without one explanatory word. I suspect the Duchess had been beforehand with me, and worked up his pride and prejudices against the match."

"Do you suppose they have taken up the opinion propagated by the Wemmersleys, that Rose is the illegitimate daughter of Di Maranham?"

"I cannot guess: my father gave me no clue to the cause of his opposition."

"But what other circumstance detrimental to poor Rose Devonport can they possibly know or imagine?"

"*That* I hope still to learn through your interposition. You will do me the very great kindness—will you not—of writing to Mrs. Baltimore, or your aunt, entreating them to vouchsafe us further information? They can have no scruple to communicate with you, by letter, on the subject;—a letter can injure no person's feelings."

"I will at least make the request."

"Thank you—thank you! Pray write by

this day's post! Remember how grievously my suspense has been already prolonged!"

"Certainly; I owe you at least that reparation."

"And by Saturday you will probably receive an answer;—by Saturday or Sunday at the farthest, if you frame your petition in the urgent terms I could desire. May I come on Sunday?"

"We receive no visitors at Holywell!" interrupted Marian. "Perhaps I had better write to you?"

"No! you would not tell me half I desire to know. Pray allow me at least to join you in your walk, as I have done to-day, that we may discuss the thing without restraint."

"*That* might easily be arranged," replied Marian, without consideration. "I walk almost every day at this hour, when the weather is fine: you can come and take your chance. And now good-bye, that I may hasten to execute your commission."

And in sight of the house she paused to

shake hands with her companion, and receive Lord Wildingham's cordial adieu and thanks, careless of the construction to which their *tête-à-tête* might be liable. She even turned, on reaching the hall-door, partly in a fit of abstraction, and partly wrapt in consideration as to the words in which she should phrase her letter to her mother, so as to command an immediate reply; but seemingly watching, till he was out of sight, the retreating figure of Lord Wildingham.

CHAPTER XIII.

Of all men else have I avoided thee!

SHAKSPEARE.

THE second parliamentary sojourn of Arthur Armytage in London was not calculated to exercise a favourable influence upon his spirits. November, with its leaden fogs—its five hours per day of daylight—its twinkling lamps—its tinkling muffin-bells—is at all times dull enough in the great Babylon, and more than enough disagreeable. But now, affording so melancholy a contrast to his recent happy spring, he found the days, short as they were, too long by half for his patience.

The business immediately before parliament happened to regard the interests of a portion of the empire, with the affairs of which the honourable member for Thoroton was at

present wholly unconversant; nor was the mode in which he heard them discussed at the sugar-canery in Portland Place calculated either to amend his ignorance or interest his indifference. The business before the other House,—the house in Baker Street,—regarded only the winter campaign of the Quorn—the Pytcheley—the Berkley Hunt—the Shrewsbury—Meynell's—Jolliffe's—the runs of the harriers—and all other hounds. St. James's Place, with its cordial hospitalities—its simple good-breeding—its happy home-ishness—was closed and deserted; while poor Lord Greta, in his Albany Chambers, plodded through his public business and private occupations, as if life had become a burthen too heavy to be borne. There was not a single hearth, a single heart, a single house to which Arthur could turn for companionship and comfort. The very Clubs seemed deserted, the theatres empty and uninviting; all, dreary and desolate as the state of his own feelings. He felt himself alone in the metropolis.

One evening, however, about a week after his arrival, as he was quitting the House of Commons for the relief of an hour's exercise and fresh air during one of the mill-stone orations of the honourable member for Drawlingham, Arthur fancied that, in a cabriolet which drove rapidly past at the moment he was issuing from the doors, he descried the countenance of Edgar Rainsford. The momentary flash of a gas-lamp afforded him, however, only uncertain suppositions on the subject; and the result was a half-uttered curse on the offender, as he took his solitary way along Parliament Street, towards his Club in Pall Mall.

But the same instantaneous glimpse by which he had been startled, had served also to arrest the attention of his once-familiar friend; and ere he reached the Treasury, a hurried step resounded on the pavement behind him,—he found himself followed—a heavy hand was laid upon his shoulder—and a hollow voice at length faltered in broken accents—"Army-

tage—my dear Armytage!" Edgar had apparently quitted his cabriolet in order to verify his doubts of Arthur's identity, and force himself into the presence of the brother of Sophia.

Arthur's first instinctive impulse was to shrink from the touch of one whom he could no longer regard otherwise than as an enemy. But Edgar would not be avoided,—would not be shaken off; and, seizing his arm, clung to it with a fervour of emotion that proved irresistible.

"What do you want with me?"—demanded Arthur, so soon as he could command the power of utterance. "I had hoped, Mr. Rainsford, you would at least spare me the painful necessity of declining all renewal of our acquaintance."

"Acquaintance!—*Mr.* Rainsford!"—ejaculated his apparently heart-broken companion. "Oh! Arthur!—have I not suffered,—do I not suffer enough, without having to endure these unmerited terms of coldness and con-

tempt? In what light can you regard me, that entitles you to throw from you the friendship of one who——"

"Talk to me no more of friendship!" interrupted Arthur, greatly excited. "Regarding you as the murderer of my beloved sister; my poor, poor Sophia,—I reject all further communication with you of a confidential nature. We must meet in the world; but let it be with the reserve becoming our relative position. I do not seek a quarrel with you, Rainsford. For *her* sake, I should be sorry that our names were brought hostilely together in the idle discussions of society. But things cannot be between us as they have been."

"The murderer of your sister,—of Sophia!" ejaculated the astonished Rainsford, as soon as he could recover breath to interrupt him. "What can you mean? Are you in your right senses? Or what abominable misrepresentations have been made you, to excite your feelings thus unjustifiably against one who would lay down his life to do you service?"

"Lay down his life to do me service!" reiterated Arthur with bitterness. "To do me a service—*me!* No!—it was not to me your services should have been devoted. It was to one as much superior to me and to yourself, as the Heavens are high above the earth! It was to one of whom, God knows, you have proved yourself undeserving."

"*She* thought so; and I was bound to submit myself to her decree!" exclaimed Rainsford in a tone of deep despondency. "Yet why her indifference towards me should entitle you to brand me with the name of assassin — !"

"Answer me truly and in one word," cried Arthur, trembling with emotion. "Are you not married?"

"I am."

Arthur Armytage, uttering a contemptuous ejaculation, forcibly withdrew his arm.

"I am married," — persisted Rainsford, closely following him. "But who drove me to the alternative, — *who* destroyed my prospects in life—*who* doomed me to a joyless

home,—to a miserable existence? Your sister, Arthur!—your sister, whom I so loved and honoured,—your sister, for whom I had so cheerfully toiled through the heavy labours of my profession,—your sister, for whose sake I so rapturously hailed the first dawning of my prosperity!—For her I would have braved all the privations, all the humiliations of poverty:—but fortune came and I blessed its coming, for I trusted it would secure to my future life the companionship of her I loved; and to Sophia, those accustomed luxuries and honours to which she was so well entitled."

He paused, overcome by his emotions. "But she determined otherwise," he resumed, after a momentary pause; "and God forgive her for the miseries her decision brought on me! *I* have forgiven her, Arthur, *I* have forgiven her. *I* have wept for her, prayed for her, mourned for her, even as I would have done, had she deigned to become my wife!" And the sobs of the unhappy man were indeed audible.

"There is something most mysterious, most unaccountable in all this!" cried Arthur, seizing Rainsford's arm, impressed in his favour by the evident sincerity of his sorrow; and apprehensive of attracting the notice of passengers in a causeway so thronged as the one they were pursuing, he pushed on hastily by his side, till they reached the opening from Pall Mall into Carlton Gardens, at that hour and season, silent and solitary.

"You spoke just now, my dear Rainsford," said Arthur, making an effort to renew the conversation,—"as if my poor sister had refused the offer of your hand. Yet Sophia's last words alluded to your desertion, and were expressive of her forgiveness."

"Her forgiveness? Ah! what offence had she to forgive!" faltered Rainsford. "I, who ever thought of her, and felt for her, and demeaned myself towards her, as towards an angel!"

"But your marriage?"

"Have I not already protested that my

marriage was the work of her hands? Nothing but Miss Armytage's positive refusal of my addresses, could have necessitated such a measure!"

"Do you mean me to understand that you at any time actually tendered your hand to my sister?"

"Within a few days of my uncle's death. No sooner was his will opened and duly authenticated, than I profited by my accession of fortune to fulfil what had been for years the darling project of my heart."

"You proposed in person?" persisted Arthur, recurring to all he had gathered from the inadvertence of Lady Laura Greta.

"No, by letter! I wrote a full explanation of my change of situation ——"

"To Sophia?"

"To Mrs. Armytage."

"To my mother!" ejaculated Arthur in an altered tone. "And what could tempt you, acquainted as you are with our family, to intrust your happiness to her keeping?"

"It was *because* I knew her, that I judged it necessary to address myself to *her* in the first instance. I enclosed a letter to your sister; but gave *carte blanche* to Mrs. Armytage for the disposal of my newly-acquired fortune, and asked her in return the hand of her daughter."

"And she answered," interrupted Arthur—

"That Sophia had left to *her* decision the disposal of her hand; that they had other views; and must beg to decline the honour of my alliance."

"My mother wrote you *that?*"

"To a word! The terms of her letter chilled me to the very soul! I have kept it as you may suppose, and will keep it till the last hour of my existence; and to-morrow, Arthur, you shall see it. But I felt then, and I feel still, that Sophia ought to have softened the abruptness of such a letter, by a few words of explanation ——"

"As I live and breathe," cried Arthur, with irrepressible vehemence, "I do believe

my sister never heard of your addresses,—never beheld that letter,—never even supposed the possibility of such a reply! Edgar!—how—how is it possible that you contented yourself with any answer save from the hand or lips of Sophia?"

"My first impulse, I own, was to hasten down to Yorkshire, and insist upon an interview. But I had already heard from Lord Downham a vague rumour that your sister was engaged to Lord Greta; and at that unlucky moment chance threw in my way our old Christchurch detestation—your cousin Reginald Maudsley—who had been spending some time at Holywell——"

"Whose hand my poor sister had just declined on your account!"

"Who assured me that a match had been made up by Mrs. Armytage between her daughter and Lord Rotherham's son; and that his fair cousin (curse upon his impudence!) appeared enchanted with her prospect of a coronet."

"And you believed him?"

"I believed at least that, from whatever cause, she had decided against myself. Arthur, if I could but express to you the misery of my mind at that conviction! I have since had her death to mourn,—I mourn it still! But the pang arising from the first blow,—the first conviction of her ingratitude,—the first knowledge that I had lived and loved in vain was far heavier to bear!"

"As God hears and judges me," ejaculated Arthur, with solemn emphasis, having been wrapt for some moments in profound meditation, "I will never forgive my mother! Sophia dying at one-and-twenty, heart-broken by her treachery! I will never forgive my mother!"

"But what could be the object of Mrs. Armytage?" interrupted Rainsford. "She knew that my uncle had bequeathed me a princely fortune; my family, if not ennobled, is highly honourable; and your mother was never a worshipper of rank."

"In former times, much the contrary. But she was at that period greatly incensed by my marriage; took various indirect modes to threaten that she would transfer her inheritance to my sister, and would, I think, have been gratified to magnify dear Sophia's importance by aristocratic aggrandizement. Yes; at that moment, I have no doubt she *did* rejoice in the prospect of seeing her daughter become Countess of Rotherham. But what a price to pay for the momentary visions of her perversity and ambition! Unhappy woman!"

"*Can* she be sufficiently unhappy?—*can* she be sufficiently punished?" cried Rainsford; "if, as you suppose, my Sophia was as much a victim as myself? Do you indeed believe, my dear Armytage, that the attachment I had been fond to attribute to your sister, remained unabated? Do you believe she still loved me?"

"Your name was the last that issued from her dying lips."

"Oh! God!" cried Rainsford, covering his face with his hands, and groaning aloud; "why was I not there! Why was I not beside her, to receive her parting breath!"

"You were *married*," replied Arthur, with some degree of bitterness; "you had no business in such a scene. Your wife—"

"My *wife!*" reiterated Rainsford: "yes—I was indeed married! And by whose agency?—by whose baleful influence? By the despotism of Mrs. Armytage!"

"Nay," replied Arthur, "my mother has enough to answer for. Charge her not with actions in which she can have no concern."

"Listen to me," cried Rainsford, "if you have time and patience; and admit that I have a right to make her accountable for more injuries than it was perhaps her purpose to inflict. I need not describe to *you* the origin and growth of my attachment to your sister; but I may observe, that if Mrs. Armytage had conceived any deeply-rooted disgust towards me—any reasonable determination

that she would not, under any change of circumstances, accord me the hand of her daughter—she was unjustifiable in admitting, year after year, at Holywell, on terms of such unreserved intimacy, the bosom-friend of her son: when, from the mere school-boy, he had grown into the Oxonian—the man of the world—the undisguisedly devoted admirer of Miss Armytage,—still, however, she welcomed me — still treated me with regard and confidence — still consigned to my elder guardianship the care of her wild and reckless son."

"I admit it," interrupted Arthur; "but even then, her intentions in favour of Reginald Maudsley were no secret at Holywell; and my mother was so accustomed to regard her will as indisputable, that I fancy she considered it impossible for either you or poor Sophy to cherish other projects."

"Nevertheless, I used to seize every occasion of announcing, in her presence, that my professional exertions had no other object than

to enable me to pretend to the hand of one from whom I was separated by disparity of fortune; and your sister so perfectly comprehended my meaning and intentions, that I scarcely believe Mrs. Armytage can have mistaken them. I admit that she did not encourage, but she laid no irrevocable interdiction upon my pretensions. I believed myself as sure of receiving justice at her hands, as indulgence at those of Sophia. Judge, therefore, of my joy, my dear Arthur, when at the close of last winter, I was suddenly summoned to attend my uncle on his death-bed, and found him disposed to make me ample amends for the neglect with which through life he had treated the only remaining representative of his family."

"If I remember rightly, you were scarcely even acquainted with the old fellow?"

"I had never but once been admitted to his presence."

"He was a miser, I fancy, or a misanthrope?"

"Rather, a humourist; for he never showed himself deficient in generosity towards strangers. Me alone he hated, as his natural heir; hated for my miserable poverty, or rather for his own want of spirit to raise me to a more becoming position in the world. - From the moment of his return from India, it was his darling project to marry and disappoint any expectations I might have formed, by the birth of children of his own to inherit his vast fortune; but the strangeness of his disposition interfered with his matrimonial speculations. He could never bring his courage to the point of a proposal; never make up his mind to entitle another to a share of his property. Year after year he renewed his plans in some fresh quarter, but always without effect; and he would return to his magnificent but solitary seat near Southampton, from Cheltenham or Brighton, or London, to curse at once the procrastinating temper which kept him still a bachelor, and the nephew who might eventually profit by the defect."

"You were fortunate that he never thought of adopting a stranger for his heir."

"No!—*There* I was safe. The old man had, in his own way, as much family pride as Mrs. Armytage; and his chief incentive to marriage was the desire of maintaining the name of Rainsford with becoming dignity. In the midst of all these humours, however, he was attacked by a dangerous illness; and hopeless of perpetuating his line, by other means, became for the first time desirous of an interview with his nephew. Judge of my surprise when I found myself summoned to Southampton!"

"And when you arrived, he was on his deathbed?"

"Or he would never have made up his mind to form any dispositions in my favour. But no sooner did he ascertain that he had only a few days to live, than a new whim entered his mind, of making me his heir and marrying me without delay. I had not been half an hour in his house, before my uncle abruptly

inquired into the state of my affections. 'Had I any attachment—had I any engagement?' —I admitted myself to be attached, but not engaged. —'Then you are an ass,' was his reply. 'How can you rely on any living woman not to make use of her liberty at your expense?—I warrant you this Miss Armytage (he had obliged me to acquaint him with her name and connexions) 'would run off with the first handsome fellow who offered her his hand and a settlement.' To take my Sophia's defence against such arguments, I judged unnecessary; but simply assured him that I had as much confidence in her regard, as if we were formally betrothed. 'You are either a desperate fool, nephew, or a very wise man,' cried the old man. 'Had *I* been of a temperament equally sanguine, you had not been here to-day; or would have found a cajoling wife of my own whining by my bedside; and a pack of brats bearing my name full of impatience to see the last of old Rainsford!'"

"Fortunately for you, your natures differed widely."

"The vehemence, meanwhile, with which my uncle discussed his disappointments, seemed injurious to him; for from the moment of my arrival, he grew rapidly worse. I was desirous to send for further advice; for a physician, for a clergyman; he would hear of nothing but a lawyer. To make his will was now his only object; and I was forced to procure him professional attendance for the purpose. 'Get out of the room, Sir! I hate to see you stand there gaping, open-mouthed, for what I may leave behind me!' was his conciliatory apostrophe to myself when the men of business made their appearance. 'But stay!—before you go,—answer me one thing. You say this Miss of yours is ready to marry you at a moment's notice?'—'I said, Sir, that want of fortune was the sole obstacle to our union,'—was my reply. 'You are ready, at least, to marry her?'—'Ready and eager!'—'You will not scruple, then, to swear to me, here on my death-bed,

by your father's name, and on your soul's salvation, that you will not play the fool as I have done; that you will not go through the ceremony of mourning when I am dead and buried, for an old fellow for whom you have never cared a straw; but marry at once, and out of hand;—Eh, nephew?—Speak out, Sir, without picking and choosing your terms; and don't dawdle away your prospects of a fortune, as I have done my chance of a wife.' "

"Of course you complied? any man under your circumstances would have complied," cried Armytage.

"Without hesitation! I took a solemn engagement, that my wedding should be solemnized within three months of his decease; and, had he specified three weeks, at such a moment, and excited as I was, I should scarcely have demurred. My promptitude seemed to gratify him. When I returned to his chamber, after he had completed the dictation and signature of his will, the poor old man grew pacified, and in better humour with himself and the world.

It was even thought he might rally; but he died that night; and on inspecting the instrument he had so singularly executed, I found a fortune of ten thousand a-year secured to me, on penalty of forfeiture, if my marriage were not solemnized within three calendar months of his decease; in which case the whole was to devolve upon a distant cousin (whose injurious treatment of my mother, during her widowhood, caused me to hold him in deep abhorrence,) on condition of his assuming the name of Rainsford."

"And did you specify those conditions in your letter to my mother?"

"No: I fancied she might feel offended that a liberty had been taken with her daughter, in bringing her so familiarly under discussion (although the *name* of Armytage was not specified in any clause of this strange bequest), and merely requested permission to address Sophia, nothing doubting, I must admit, that her answer would be favourable to my suit. I held myself in readiness to start for Yorkshire im-

mediately on receiving her letter, and trusted to my own eloquence and Sophia's affection, to accelerate the solemnization of the happy event. Judge therefore, of the excess of my disappointment, of the excess of my consternation, on perusing her cold, her arrogant reply"

"Still I can hardly understand your giving up a point so important, without addressing yourself directly to my sister?"

"Mrs. Armytage's answer clearly implied that she wrote with Sophia's sanction. And then I was deeply offended, deeply piqued; I had expected so different a reception! And when Maudsley assured me that Miss Armytage was engaged to Lord Greta—"

"There, no doubt, lay your real provocation."

"You were on the Continent. I had no one to whom to apply for more authentic intelligence. And when at length I learned from Lady Emily Romer (whose house, as a relative of the Spaldings, I was in the habit of fre-

quenting, with the view of gaining news of Yorkshire,——of Holywell) that Lord Rotherham made no secret of his delight in the intended match, I grew furious, mad—"

"And proposed to Miss Romer, by way of retaliation!"

"Not however without frankly acquainting her with the terms of my uncle's will,—that I was an unhappy, a disappointed man; that she must take me with all the irritations of temper, all the inequalities of humour, to which my position might give rise. She accepted me: and I have no right to communicate further of my history than that, while hurrying through Italy to escape from Lady Emily's interference in my domestic concerns, and my own vexatious reminiscences, I accidentally heard of the illness of Sophia. A vain, a mad, perhaps a wicked desire, to see her again, to implore her at least to compassionate the wretchedness she had inflicted, took possession of my mind. I insisted on returning home; pretended business of importance, left my wife with her family at

Paris, and arrived in England only to read in the newspapers an announcement that I was too late,—that my Sophia was already in her grave. Answer me, Arthur! can I ever forgive Mrs. Armytage?"

CHAPTER XIII.

D'après mon blason
Je crois ma maison
Plus noble, ma foi,
Que celle du Roi!

BÉRANGER.

WHO will deny that the newspapers of this gossipping century, which, like bank-notes, have

"Lent corruption lighter wings to fly,"

are fatally effective in diffusing the idler vanities of life? It is not alone the "leaders" of "the leading journals of Europe" which may be fairly termed the "mis-leaders of the times;" scarcely a minor "we hear," or subordinate "it is said," bearing reference to visits paid or dinners given, but has its influence in causing the little to pass for great, and of the great diminishing the importance.

Day after day, for instance, the fog-bewildered population of the murmuring *grenouillière*

of Great Britain, was taught by the magniloquence of the morning papers to venerate the newly-acquired consequence of Mr. Lomax Marscourt, by the following and similar announcements.

"Much notice is attracted among the beautiful equipages remarkable just now at Brighton, by the splendid vis-à-vis of the charming bride, the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt; the body, a bright canary picked out with black, and lined with watered silk of a pearl grey; the hammer-cloth, matching the family liveries, of white, with a rich bullion fringe. A pair of thoroughbred grey horses with plain black harness, completes this distinguished turn-out."

"Among the names left for their Majesties yesterday at the Pavilion, were those of Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt."

"Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt entertained a fashionable party at dinner on Sunday last, at their magnificent residence in Regency Square; including the Lord Chancellor, the Master of the Horse, the Bishop

of Aylesbury, and his lady, Lord and Lady Spunge, and the Hon. Mr. and Misses Spunge, Sir Timothy and Lady Twitter, the Duchess of Spalding, and the Ladies Spalding, with various other members of the noble family of the amiable hostess."

"Among the company present on Wednesday last, at her Majesty's ball, we omitted to notice the names of Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Lomax Marscourt."

"We understand that Mr. Lomax Marscourt (a near connexion of the Duke of Spalding) has taken a lease for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, of Courtierfield Lodge, in the neighbourhood of Windsor Forest."

"Mr. Lomax Marscourt, it seems, is the purchaser of the fine mansion just completing at the north-east corner of Belgrave Square. Messrs. Ottoman and Jos have just received a commission to furnish it in a style of Oriental magnificence."

"The sketch of the "Battle of Bunker's

Hill," now exhibiting at the gallery of Associated Artists in Suffolk Street, by a rising young artist of the name of Cringe, much distinguished by the patronage of her Grace the Duchess of Spalding, has been purchased at the price of one hundred and seventy-five guineas by a wealthy amateur, Mr. L. Marscourt, of Courtierfield Lodge."

"We learn that Messrs. Rundell and Bridge have just sent in designs for the central group of the noble service of plate now in progress for Mr. L. Marscourt, of Belgrave Square and Courtierfield Lodge."

"We have the pleasure to observe, in last night's Gazette, the elevation of Mr. Lomax Marscourt to the Baronetage."

"Sir Leon and the Hon. Lady Marscourt, are expected to take possession of their suite of apartments at Mivart's Hotel (the suite commonly known as *l'appartement des Princes*) early in the ensuing month. The furnishing of their splendid mansion in Belgrave Square

cannot be completed till after Easter, when her Ladyship will open her house for a series of fashionable entertainments."

"The centre box of the ground tier at the King's Theatre, occupied last season by her Excellency Princess Sauerkraut-Fuchsenbuttel, has been engaged by the Hon. Lady Marscourt."

"At her Majesty's drawing-room we particularly noticed the elegant presentation dress of the Hon. Lady Marscourt; a robe of *tissu Memphis* of silver and cerulean blue; train of silver brocade lined with white satin, and trimmed with a garniture of hyacinths *en bouquet*. *Corsage en pointe,* ornamented with a resplendent stomacher of *nœuds,* in brilliants of the finest water. Head-dress, a plume of ostrich feathers, with a diadem of diamonds mounted *en avoine.* The beauty of this striking costume could only be equalled by that of the lovely wearer."

"At his Majesty's levee on Wednesday last, Sir Leon Marscourt was presented on his

marriage, by his noble relative the Duke of Spalding."

And it was, perhaps, the Wemmersleys alone who, on the perusal of all this trash, indulged in the Burchellian exclamation of "Fudge!" One or two may have inquired, "Who is Sir Leon Marscourt?" when the papers readily supplied an answer to the query—"a relative of the Spalding family." "Very true," was now the answer to the answer: "I remember the Duke of Spalding's sister marrying the Irish Lord Marscourt; no doubt this man is one of the family. He seems to be making a figure: we must manage to be introduced to him."

And thus in a short time, the visiting list of Sir Leon and his Honourable lady, abounded in inscriptions of princes, peers, and Knights of the Garter.

But, while the Duke of Spalding was occupied in promoting the dignities of his nigger-driving nephew-in-law, and the Duchess in

promoting the interests of her innumerable *protégés* at Sir Leon's expense, while the Ladies Amabel and Honoria profited by the eligibilities of Brighton, for a little winter flirting-extraordinary. Spalding Court remained almost deserted; inhabited only by Lord Cecil, ostensibly devoted to fox-hunting, and Lord Wildingham, secretly devoted to the pursuance of his love affairs at the Grange. To this pursuit, time, tide, convenience, dandyism, all were cheerfully sacrificed; and finding Mill-Hill put into a sulky state of defence by the Wemmersleys, against the future incursions of the Spalding family, he did not even scruple to sleep at the Blue Boar, on the night preceding his appointed interview with Mrs. Arthur Armytage, lest, by being late at the place of rendezvous, he might postpone, for even half an hour, the acquisition of knowledge so essential to his happiness.

But although he arrived exactly at the same spot at the same hour which, five days before, had secured him an interview with Marian,

he arrived in vain. Mrs. Arthur was indisposed, and unable to appear at the place of meeting; and in her stead, he had the mortification to find Mademoiselle Celestine with a note of apology! Mrs. Arthur had at present received no answer to her letter; but promised to write to Lord Wildingham the moment she was in possession of the desired intelligence.

More suspense — further procrastination — hope deferred—fears prolonged! Was it to be expected that a lover, and of the romantic school, should submit with patience to Marian's decree? No! Lord Wildingham's time was thenceforward devoted to the cold-catching task of loitering in the very neighbourhood of the Grange, regardless of fog, rain, or sleet, for the chance of obtaining a momentary glimpse of the object of his idolatry;—(at the risk of a personal encounter with the doughty Mistress Di, whose dispositions towards the house of Spalding were by no means dulcified by the recent disappointment of her designs

upon the "old Injee gentleman;") and yet he found a moment in every day to diverge from the Grange towards Holywell, and wander about the park, in hopes of obtaining intelligence of his kind confidante. Not having heard from Marian, he would not deny himself the chance of personal interrogation. It never occurred to him that these frequent and furtive visits might be noticed by lodge-keepers or game-keepers; or that he often approached so near the house as to become an object of curiosity to peeping ladies' maids, or prying butlers;—to the spectacles of old Simmons, or perhaps even the telescope in the library-window of Mrs. Armytage.

At length, however, his perseverance was rewarded. After a week's infructuous pilgrimages, Lord Wildingham had the happiness of descrying at a distance the long-watched-for figure of Mrs. Arthur Armytage, and, on approaching and greeting her with inquiries after her health, which scarcely waited a reply, of learning that she had re-

ceived from her mother the desired particulars.

"*Satisfactory?*" was his abrupt inquiry, almost trembling as he waited Marian's answer to his demand.

"I wish I could say so! But you must prepare for much that is disagreeable—disagreeable for me to relate—for you to hear. I am trespassing against mamma's commands in communicating to you the contents of her letter; but I have not courage to withhold information which I know to be so important to your welfare."

"You are acquainted, then, with the mystery of Rosamond's birth?"

"Here is the letter—read it yourself," replied Marian, placing one in his hands, which Lord Wildingham proceeded to unfold and decipher. But his impatience was too painfully thwarted by the illegibility of Mrs. Baltimore's slovenly hand-writing, and the prolixity of her style.

"I *cannot* read it," he cried, giving up the task in despair. "If you have any pity on

me, dearest Mrs. Armytage,—tell me, in a few brief words—who is she?—who are her parents?—what is the origin of my father's deeply-rooted objections?"

"In the first place, she is my cousin."

"Ha! your cousin?" ejaculated his Lordship, too prudent, in the midst of all his emotion, to betray an opinion that a connexion with the Baltimore family might be indeed a plausible motive for the disapproval of the Duke.

"A daughter,—and, I fear, illegitimate,—of one of my Irish uncles."

Lord Wildingham walked on, in gloomy silence. "There needs but one addition to this disastrous history," cried he at last. "Is Di Maranham her mother?"

"Not quite. Do you remember the invalid sister who received us when we visited the Grange?"

"Perfectly; a poor, miserable nonentity, without sense or feeling. And *she*, then, is the sinner! And is poor Rose aware of all these miseries?"

"Of Rose, my mother knows, of course, far less than we do, having seen her for the first and last time that day at Scarborough Castle."

"Would to Heaven we had all been millions of miles distant! But for that unlucky encounter, I might have remained ignorant of the truth,—married with my eyes shut,—and only discovered the ineligibility of the connexion, when it was too late to repent!"

"I cannot agree with you," replied Marian, faintly smiling. "If you feel sufficiently attached to Rose to desire to have been betrayed into making her your wife, surely your affection must be strong enough to enable you to brave the prejudices of society?"

"No!—Fool as you may think me, I am much too wise to *walk* into a well!—Had I *stumbled* in, I should have thanked my stars that I had escaped drowning, and that matters were no worse. As it is, I must get over my disappointment as well as I can; set off on a tour to Algiers or Fernando Po—

no matter where; and give a new turn to my ideas."

Lord Wildingham tried to speak cheerfully, but the effort did not avail to disguise his deep vexation. All his questions were those of intense agitation; and Marian, replying to his manner rather than to his words, entreated him to compose himself.

"Thank you, thank you!" cried he, fully justifying her implication. "You do well to remind me that I am playing the fool! At *my* time of life, and with *my* pretensions to the insensibility of a man of the world, such an exposure is indeed unpardonable! Yet how can it be otherwise? That *I*, Wyndham Spalding, should have escaped unhurt, all the temptations of Paris, Milan, Naples, Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, nay! all the traps and snares of match-making London,—and at the very moment of achieving unexpected independence, chance upon

'a creature
Framed in the very poetry of Nature;'

possessed of beauty without coquetry, naïveté without rusticity, virtue without prudery, talents without pretensions, — that I should even succeed (as I have good cause to believe) in impressing her strongly in my favour,—yet be debarred by untoward circumstances,—by objections which, lover as I am, I admit to be insuperable,—from making her my wife. By Heavens! it is enough to make even a stoic forget his philosophy."

And again, his Lordship's gestures evinced the most uncontrollable emotion.

"Pray, pardon me," remonstrated his companion, "for not seeing things in the desperate light that you do. The connexion may be objectionable, yet surely, independent as you are——"

"No!—I am not independent," interrupted Lord Wildingham, with increasing vehemence. "You are not yet half acquainted with me! I possess virtues to which, in these times, I should perhaps blush to plead guilty. Can

you believe—(I am half ashamed to make the confession!)—that I would rather give up fifty Rosamond Devonports, than marry in opposition to my father's commands. You do not guess how good a father he has been to me,—how generous—how indulgent; how often he has embarrassed himself by paying my debts from his private purse, rather than expose my follies to my mother's animadversions, and the cool sarcasms of Cecil and Downham. I have sometimes taken the liberty of laughing at him in society, lest I should be suspected of so plebeian a vice as filial affection; but to you I admit, in strictest confidence, that I love and venerate my father."

Marian, beginning to suspect, from his strangeness of discourse and excitement of manner, that her companion was losing his reason, rejoiced that they were advancing within view of the house.

"Such uprightness of mind, such nobleness of character!" persisted his Lordship,—"and

such a life as he has led! No one who has not watched him as I have done, can appreciate the patience with which he submits to the undue interference of my mother;—the good breeding, the good nature,—with which he bears with all our impertinence. Not, however, from insensibility. No!—The Duke has a feeling heart; nay, I have reason to believe that he has been through life the victim of disappointed affections."

"He may therefore be the more inclined to leniency in any matter concerning the happiness of his son!"

"On that score, no hope!—My father would not have expressed himself so strongly, without having taken a fixed determination; or have taken a fixed determination without sufficient motive. I *know* the equity of his principles."

"You are resolved to accept no consolation I can offer."

"I am resolved not to deceive myself,—not

to deceive others. All that is left for me is to seek an interview with Rosamond, acquaint her that my hopes are at end; and then, quit this place. May I come and visit you once more, previously to my departure? It is so great a comfort to pour out one's vexations to a kind and indulgent listener!"

"Certainly — certainly. Since the discovery of my near relationship to poor Rosamond, I feel a double interest in the affair; and if you delay your departure till next week, you will have Arthur as well as myself to sympathize in your distresses. I expect my husband on Monday;—you little know with what impatience!"

"Indeed I do! Holywell and Mrs. Armytage in November weather! But I must not detain you in the cold," he continued, perceiving that she had now stopped short to bid him farewell. And, after having gallantly raised her hand to his lips, Lord Wildingham pulled his hat over his face, and with hasty

steps and a gloomy countenance, took his way towards the lodge of Holywell Park. But neither his coming nor his going, nor the agitated interview which intervened, had escaped the notice of prying and malicious observers.

CHAPTER XIV.

Pride, treachery, envy, hypocrisy, malice, cruelty, and self-love, have occasioned, in one shape or other, all the frauds and mischiefs that ever happened in the world; but the chances against a coincidence of them all in one person are so many, that one would have supposed the character of a *slanderer* as rare a production in nature as that of a great genius, which seldom appears above once in an age.—STERNE.

On the following day, when Mrs. Armytage, by a system of personal ungraciousness overpowering to a nature so timid as that of Marian, had contrived to take her airing to Greta Castle, leaving her daughter-in-law at home, Mrs. Arthur was agreeably surprised to find Dr. Grant enter the library, where she was amusing herself with a book, while little Harriet rolled on the floor at her feet.

"How kind of you to come and see me!" she cried, rising to welcome the revered friend of the family. "But perhaps you expected

to find Mrs. Armytage? She is gone to visit Lady Rotherham."

"I know it. I met the carriage near the lodge. I came to see *you*," he replied, taking an unoffered seat by her side;—"to see you, and to scold you."

"To scold me? I hope not."

"You used to hear one who was very dear to both of us call me her second conscience. Do you know, I am half inclined to assume some such office towards yourself? Have I your permission?"

"I am sure I need one more than *she* can have ever done!" exclaimed Marian, with tears in her eyes. "And it will be very kind to take as much trouble about a person so much less deserving your attention."

"I must not have you plead guilty too soon," said Dr. Grant, assuming a more cheerful tone; "or you will render nugatory the fine opening charge I had prepared against you. Seriously, my dear young lady (and I *dare* speak both seriously and candidly, for

among the many obligations I acknowledge to Miss Armytage, is that of learning to appreciate your merits,)—seriously, then, I hear sad stories of you! They tell me you have private meetings with fine gentlemen here in Holywell Park."

"If by fine gentlemen you mean poor Lord Wildingham, I certainly *have*," answered Marian, smiling at the accusation. "I have met him twice—and he is coming here again before he leaves the country."

"You make at least no secret of your assignations," observed the good pastor, his misgivings already half relieved by the sweetness of her imperturbed countenance.

"Why should I? What harm can there be in Lord Wildingham's coming here to take a walk or hold a conversation with such a person as I am?"

"In the first place, what do you mean by '*such* a person?'"

"I mean, a married woman,—a mother,—one who thinks and intends no wrong. Sup-

posing Lord Wildingham, indeed, had been seen with some pretty girl, some ——"

"You mean, in short, that 'to the pure all things are pure,'" interrupted Dr. Grant, smiling at her simplicity and humble appreciation of her own attractions. "But beware! However pure your own intentions, —your own character,—Lord Wildingham is a libertine, and of such people the world delights in making evil inferences."

"Mr. Wemmersley delights in making evil inferences! I am sure you heard all this nonsense from Mr. Wemmersley," said Marian.

"Not from him alone; or I should hardly consider it worth a thought. The circumstances to which I allude have attracted the notice of persons whose scrutiny and reports are more to be dreaded—of servants—of the gossips of the village. They know your husband to be absent,—they know you to be young and pretty;—and forming conclusions from all this, have framed a romance which it

would grieve me much should reach the ears of Mrs. Armytage."

"I wish I were at liberty to acquaint you with the real motive of Lord Wildingham's visit!" cried Marian, caring more for the good opinion of Dr. Grant than for the displeasure of Mrs. Armytage. "When I see him again, I will beg permission to take you into our confidence."

"I would far rather he did *not* come again, or at least not till my friend Arthur returns from London. Your husband will be here next week."

"But Lord Wildingham will, I fear, have left Yorkshire by that time!" said Marian, with a deep sigh.

"I am heartily glad he is going!" observed the doctor. "He has been here too long already."

"Indeed I fear so!" responded Mrs. Arthur Armytage. "But it is too late to think of that now. The mischief is done."

"Not altogether too late," cried Dr. Grant,

looking at her with amazement, and referring her expressions to herself. "You *must* promise me that you will have no more clandestine meetings before his departure!"

"Indeed—indeed I cannot! If you did but know how grievously poor Lord Wildingham's feelings are affected, you would not ask it. His only consolation consists in an occasional conversation with *me;* it is not much to accord, and I cannot answer it to myself to refuse the concession."

Dr. Grant drew his chair further off. "I am disappointed!" said he gravely. "I *did* hope that the glaring impropriety of such proceedings, once pointed out by a person who has only your happiness and respectability at heart,—who has no prejudices to warp his feelings against you,—the father of daughters,—the confidential friend of that angelic sister by whom you were so tenderly beloved,—you would have desisted. I am disappointed!"

"My dear Dr. Grant!" exclaimed Marian, almost in tears, "is it possible that you see

any thing so important in this silly affair? Is it possible that ——" But to proceed was out of the question. The Vicar of Holywell was not the only person who had descried Mrs. Armytage alone in her carriage, and hastened to take advantage of her absence to penetrate the now sealed portal. Mr. Wemmersley here made his most inopportune appearance; and Marian had the dissatisfaction to discern from his inquiries, suggestions, and inuendoes, that Lord Wildingham's visits to Holywell Park were affording ample food to his slanderous propensities.

"I suppose we shall have Armytage down in a day or two?" he demanded, in a tone that seemed intended to give rather than require information. "I met Lord Rotherham and his daughter riding on the Wolverfield Road yesterday; and Lady Laura assured me we might expect our friend Arthur on Friday or Saturday."

Marian, without even changing colour,—for

she was now proof against all insinuations respecting Lady Laura Greta, — simply replied, "Then, rely upon it, he will come! Arthur is in daily communication with his friend Lord Greta, who has doubtless written word of my husband's intentions."

"What a relief it will be to you to have him here again!" exclaimed Wemmersley, with a malicious glance at her countenance. "Your time must have passed so *very* heavily;—you must have found yourself so *very* lonely!"

"We have no right to expect cheerfulness in this house, at present," replied Marian with firmness. "But you perceive that Dr. Grant has not abandoned us;—we sometimes see our friends from Greta Castle;—I have had frequent visits from Lord Wildingham;—and in fact it is only our mere acquaintances who are excluded from Holywell."

The doctor was better pleased with the explicitness with which his fair penitent alluded to Lord Wildingham's visits, than with the

hard hit at Wemmersley, which concluded her reply; for the angry man immediately retorted with—

"Visits from Wildingham? Aha! That accounts for his lordship's extreme anxiety to make an inn of my house; failing which gracious intention, I find he has been skulking at the Blue Boar, on and off, for the last three weeks."

"Scarcely so long, I fancy," said Marian coolly.

"Lord Wildingham must find it dull at Spalding Court, now that his family are absent," observed Dr. Grant, by way of extenuation.

"I conclude the Duchess is gone to Brighton to enjoy the society of the Lomax Marscourts?" inquired Marian archly of Mr. Wemmersley. "I shall recommend Lord Wildingham to join the party! Sir Leon will form so amusing a study for his sarcastic humour."

"I should think he amused himself quite

sufficiently at the Blue Boar," retorted the enraged Wemmersley. "And yet, considering the time of year,—that Wildingham is no sportsman,—and that, if he were, he cannot command half an acre to shoot over in this part of the country, one cannot help wondering what he finds so attractive in the neighbourhood of Thoroton."

"Mr. Wemmersley is not very complimentary to us, you perceive, my dear Madam," said Dr. Grant to Mrs. Arthur, becoming anxious to silence the impertinent allusions of their guest: "He counts you and me for nothing, among the attractions of the country! We must console ourselves with knowing that Lord Wildingham thinks better of us."

Wemmersley was puzzled! He had expected to find himself backed in his attack by Dr. Grant; and at this moment of unexpected defeat, was not sorry to hear the approach of a carriage.

"Pardon me for reminding you that Mrs.

Armytage at present receives no visitors," observed Marian, on perceiving the mourning liveries of her mother-in-law. "Indeed, I heard her expressly mention your name the other day among those of our neighbours whom she did not feel equal to see. At some future time ——"

Wemmersley gave her no time to conclude the sentence; but rising in haste, quitted the room, almost without a farewell salutation.

"You have done unwisely," observed Dr. Grant, before Mrs. Armytage entered the library, "in provoking that man. He may take an opportunity of returning you evil for evil. Beware of him. Even without taxing him as a slanderer, you must admit a tale-bearer to be a dangerous neighbour?"

"But, my dear Dr. Grant, I could only be so cautious and so apprehensive, had I any *real* guilt to be reproached with."

Dr. Grant shook his head. He could not reply, for Mrs. Armytage's lowering countenance was already visible on the threshold,

and although beginning to hope that Marian's hardihood might be that of perfect innocence, he was not satisfied with the result of his mission. He felt forewarned of evil to come, though scarcely knowing from what quarter.

Arthur, meanwhile, was preparing for his return home, in anything but amended spirits. The society of two men, so afflicted as Greta and Edgar Rainsford, in mournful alternation, had not tended to diminish the painful reminiscences of the last two months; while the perusal of his mother's unjustifiable letter to the latter, filled his mind with indignation against Mrs. Armytage. It was clear that she had profited by Sophia's filial submission, on the occasion of Reginald Maudsley's proposal, to reject those of Rainsford without the slightest reference to her daughter. It was clear that the gentle victim's despair and death were the work of her hands; that the prospects of the gifted and noble-minded Edgar were irrevocably blighted by her

arbitrary dealings. The happiness of two persons, born to be examples in their generation, had been wantonly wrecked at the caprice of her despotic temper. Never had Arthur's feelings been so strongly excited against his mother.

In this state of mind, he arrived at Holywell; and instantly perceived, from the mode of Mrs. Armytage's reception, that she was as unconciliatorily disposed towards him as he towards herself. He had scarcely ever seen her so cold—so ungracious. He discerned, too, in the overflowing joy of Marian's welcome, how painfully she had been passing the time of his absence—how much she had needed a champion—how much a comforter.

Yet nothing could induce his wife to utter one unkind—one accusing word! In vain did Arthur interrogate her with leading questions; Marian would not admit that she had been ill-used or unhappy.

"Poor Mrs. Armytage is just now so greatly to be pitied," was her reply to all his inquiries, "that she has a claim upon our utmost indulgence. Let us remember her afflictions—*not* advert to her failings."

CHAPTER XVI.

O mother, mother!
What have you done? Behold the Heavens do ope',
The Gods look down, and this unnatural scene
They laugh at!

SHAKSPEARE.

ARTHUR had, luckily, so timed his arrival that the ceremonial of dinner broke through, in some degree, the still weightier ceremonial of conversation between persons suffering under the constraint arising from mutual dissatisfaction. The mere routine of "Shall I give you some mutton?—Do you take sherry or madeira?" forms a welcome interruption to the meditations of those who, having much to say, yet dare not give it utterance. Politics, too, served their usual turn in the dining-room. Arthur, fortunately, found an infinite deal of nothing to communicate, which he had recently heard put forth beneath the senatorial

roof, touching the malignant state of public feeling in Ireland, and the benignant intentions of government; even without alluding to the duodecimo speech of little Dyke Robsey, touching *his* peculiar project of Hibernian reform, by laying down railroads across the Bog of Allen and the houseless wilds of Connemara.

But all his attempts to beguile Mrs. Armytage into a more conversible humour were unavailing. Her replies were as oracular as they were uncivil; and every monosyllable seemed studiously intended to bring his remarks to a full stop, in order to break forth on some topic of her own selection. Arthur and Marian, meanwhile, sat forming unpleasant conjectures as to the nature of the subject that required to be ushered in with a degree of mystery and majesty rivalling the overture of the Freischutz.

Tea passed, however, without further explanation; and Mrs. Arthur was beginning to hope that they might at least get through

that first evening without an explosion. But her husband, who, having a communication to make on the morrow with his solicitors in town, judged it unnecessary to defer certain inquiries of his mother, touching the valuation of his sister's personal property, indispensable in order to obtain probate of her will, at length hazarded a few questions to Mrs. Armytage, which she chose to construe into a personal offence. "She had expressed," she said, "in the first instance her determination not to concern herself in a matter from the administration of which she had been pointedly excluded by her daughter; and considered all further reference to herself an insult." Arthur's reply was respectful but firm. The inquiries he had made respecting the value of poor Sophia's jewels were such as she alone could answer, and such as his lawyers had judged important to the completion of their duty. He regretted to harass her—he regretted to distress her feelings; but since she wished to resist all reference, he must cause

the estimates to be made by professional persons.

"No doubt you will!" was the wayward woman's rejoinder. "I should recommend for the office your friend and ally, Mr. Gumption, of Thoroton. It will be but one offence more against the decencies of your mother's roof,—one more degradation of your family and fame."

Arthur was wisely silent; for he saw nothing in so unjustifiable an attack demanding a reply. But Mrs. Armytage would not be so evaded.

"Understand, however," — she resumed,— "that there are certain humiliations to which I am not disposed to submit. You, from motives of your own, may think proper to court the corrupt society of the Spaldings, regardless of the light in which such a dereliction from the principles of your family may place you in the eyes of the world. On such points, thank Heaven, I feel differently. I do not choose the reputation of my house to be compromised by the secret connexions of

my son or my son's wife with a flippant libertine. Even though a peer of the realm, I do not choose my neighbours and tenants to be scandalized by the indecent familiarities of a Mrs. Arthur Armytage with a titled coxcomb, while residing at Holywell."

Arthur's lips grew white with rage, and involuntarily he clenched his hands; while Marian, trembling in her chair, knew not to which party to turn for justification.

"I can well understand,"—pursued Mrs. Armytage, too much excited to notice the gestures of either,—"that such proceedings may be strictly in accordance with the principles of the pupil of a Lady Emily Maclaren, or Arabella Quin,—or that the daughter of a Mr. Baltimore may discern nothing contrary to the proprieties of life, in clandestine walks and assignations; but——"

"Stop!" cried Arthur, in a hoarse but imperative voice. "Before you commit yourself further by these harsh and cruel accusations,

know, madam, that I am fully acquainted with every particular of my wife's conduct since we parted; and that I am perfectly satisfied, both with her proceedings and their motives."

"Perhaps so,"—replied Mrs. Armytage, irritated rather than intimidated by his violence. "But *my* opinions, also, are to be consulted. *I* am *not* satisfied!—My mind revolts from those licences of the fashionable world with which you may have been familiarized by a residence abroad, or by frequenting society so profligate as that of Spalding Court. I beg therefore to acquaint you—"

"Mother!" interrupted Arthur, gasping for breath, but standing erect before her: "You well know in what respect I have ever held your purity of mind and manners. You well know what veneration your blamelessness of life has always commanded at my hands. Yet I swear to you, by all that is holiest in heaven or earth, not even yourself are more incapable of an immodest thought or action,

than my wife. I would peril every drop of blood in my veins on the perfectness of her virtue."

Marian's tears fell fast on hearing this attestation. Oh! how she rejoiced at the circumstantiality with which, even at the risk of wearying him, she had related in her letters to Arthur every particular of her meetings with Lord Wildingham,—nay! even the reprehensions of Dr. Grant! But Mrs. Armytage remained implacable. She was only further enraged on finding her own conduct brought into comparison with that of such a person as Jack Baltimore's daughter.

"It is very well," cried she. "With you or with your blindness, I have no need to argue. It only remains for me to tell you that I will not have the house of my fathers degraded by the infamy of others; that I will not have an abandoned woman follow up her career of vice triumphantly under my roof."

"Silence!"—cried Arthur, in a tone that

seemed to shake the very walls. "Silence—or you will repent this shameful injustice!"

But the angry spirit of Mrs. Armytage became roused to a higher pitch by her son's imperative interdiction. Rising and confronting him, while the glowing blood swelled every vein in her temples, she exclaimed—"It is therefore my command that you seek some other shelter for the misconduct you are resolved to sanction. Holywell is no longer your home! Henceforward, the doors are closed upon you and yours. Sleep this night for the last time under my roof—and, to-morrow, quit my sight for ever! Thank Heaven, there are honourable men of my name and family more worthy to succeed to its inheritance."

"Arthur—Arthur!" cried Marian, flinging herself upon her husband's bosom, entwining her arms at one moment round his waist, and the next frantically placing her hands upon his lips, to impede his utterance;—"Beware what you are about to do,—your whole life long will

you repent your rashness, if you are tempted to proclaim the truth. Arthur, desist! My dear husband! for the love of *me*, for the love of GOD!—Reflect!—she is your mother!—Arthur! Arthur! *Would* you destroy your mother?"

And casting herself at his feet she implor-ingly embraced his knees; and, while her long fair hair hung dishevelled round her pale face, again and again faltered in broken accents:—"for *my* sake, for your own, spare, spare your mother."

Arthur Armytage stood transfixed with amazement. Till that moment, he had not half comprehended the excellence, the patience, the resignation of his wife. She *had* then, from the first, been aware of the extent of her rights, had throughout united with himself in forbear-ance towards her persecutress, without once embarrassing him by allusion to her discovery of the will.

Seizing Marian's hands, he raised her to his heart; and again and again passionately em-

braced her. Her prudence had almost recalled him to reason. But Mrs. Armytage became infuriated by the sight of these evidences of mutual confidence and affection.

"Whatever mysteries you may have to unfold," she observed in a concentrated voice, "I beg *my* feelings may not be spared at the intercession of that woman. Speak out, sir, complete your outrage! As this will be, I trust, our last interview,—speak, before you quit my house for ever!"

"Your house!" he exclaimed, no longer master of his indignation: "It is yours no longer; your rule here has been tolerated only by my forbearance. By virtue of a codicil to my grandfather's will, lodged in the hands of Lord Rotherham, the estate of Holywell became mine on the attainment of my majority. I claim restitution of my rights! Your haughty temper has broken the heart of my poor sister, and bowed her to an early grave. My child has been as a changeling in my house,—my wife an alien,—myself a miserable dependent.

But for Marian's candour, you would have raised between us a cloud of suspicion and discord, fatal perhaps to our mutual happiness. You would have driven us forth to poverty,—you would have made us vile,—you would have made us wretched. But it is now your turn to suffer!—It is *your* pride which must henceforth be humbled; for to-morrow, in the sight of the whole world, will I proclaim myself master of Holywell."

His voice was broken by sobs of emotion. Irritated as he was, Arthur still shrank from the act of barbarous justice he was executing; while Marian, seeing that all hope of concealment was now at an end, sank half fainting into a chair. But just as Arthur was about to fly to her assistance, his eye was arrested by the rigid figure of Mrs. Armytage, drawn up to its utmost height; her eyes dilated, her form motionless, her face paler than marble; and, falling on the ground at her feet, he involuntarily ejaculated, "Forgive me, mother!—forgive me! I know not what I have been

uttering. I am mad—wicked!—forgive me, mother!—forget all I have been saying. Let the past be buried in oblivion. Forgive me, mother! Confide in the repentance and dutiful submission of your son!"

CHAPTER XVII.

She shall think,
Though he divide the realm, and give her half,
It is too little, helping him to all.

SHAKSPEARE.

ARTHUR ARMYTAGE has already been admitted a disrespecter of hours and conventions. It will therefore excite little surprise, that he should be found by the bedside of Dr. Grant at two o'clock in the morning following this memorable night.

"How soundly you sleep, my dear doctor!" he exclaimed, drawing aside the curtains with an unsteady hand. "You did not hear me enter the house or the room, although I was obliged to make some disturbance to rouse up your servant; and here have I been sitting by your side this half hour or more."

"Have you?" said the doctor, rubbing his eyes. "When did you arrive from town?

How came you in my bed-room, and what is the matter?"

"I will tell you when you are quite awake. What health and what a conscience you must have, to sleep so soundly."

"My dear Arthur, you seem in a very incoherent mood; you almost alarm me."

"And so I ought! My dear doctor! I am the most miserable man in the world! I have this night given a death-blow to my mother!"

"I am wide awake now!" cried Dr. Grant, starting up and hastily throwing on his dressing-gown. "Explain yourself, Arthur. What have you been about? What has occurred at Holywell?"

"It is a long story. Some time will be required to put you in possession of all the particulars; but a few words may serve to claim your assistance. Know, then, that for many months I have been in possession of a will of my grandfather Maudsley, bequeathing me his whole fortune and estates. From the first, it was my intention to leave my mother undis-

turbed possession of Holywell for her life, and to suppress the will for her sake. But having arrived here to-day with my mind embittered against her by the recently-acquired knowledge that her refusal of Rainsford's proposals for my sister was the sole cause of poor Sophia's untimely end, I was at length driven to distraction by the cruelty of her unauthorized accusations against my wife. *She* ended, in short, with dismissing us in the most ignominious manner from Holywell; and *I*, frantically and inexcusably, replied by acquainting her with the truth,—that *I* alone am master of the house; each of us, in turn, overpowered by violence of temper! My dear doctor, I shall never forgive myself!"

"I can scarcely understand all this!" exclaimed his astonished companion. "Am I dreaming, Arthur, or are you? Your mother no longer mistress of Holywell?"

"My grandfather's will assigns her a jointure of two thousand a-year—nothing further."

"Can I see the will?'

"It is at present deposited at Greta Castle; and there, Heaven knows, I could wish it to remain. Doctor, you must dress and come with me to Holywell, and aid me in persuading my mother to forget the disclosures I have made. The circumstances are still a secret to all the world,—can easily remain so. It would kill my mother to be forced to the resignation of her rights. For Heaven's sake, help me to overcome her scruples; and persuade her to retain a life-right in the property."

"But you say she has *no* right?"

"No *right;* but I am willing to concede everything—to make any sacrifice!"

"So you thought before; yet you see the first ebullition of temper shook you from your purpose."

"But henceforward I shall be doubly warned against my own intemperance. Besides, it will be impossible for her to conduct

herself a second time with such injurious harshness towards my wife. *Do* persuade her to let all that has passed be forgotten."

"Do not require impossibilities! You must be certain that the fact will never for a single moment be absent from the mind of Mrs. Armytage."

"Not if she find Marian and myself more respectful—more submissive than ever in our demeanour towards her?"

"She will always fancy you are acting a part, and subduing your own feelings in deference to hers."

"And if we *were?*—"

"Your conduct might be urged by the best motives; but you would stand relatively to each other in a false position; and could never feel at ease. I should decidedly advise Mrs. Armytage, for discretion, as well as conscience sake, to resign Holywell at once to the rightful possessor."

"My dear doctor, how *can* you argue so coldly on the subject?"

"Have you not just assured me that all this mischief has been produced by over-warmth?"

"True! but when an opportunity for a generous resolution—a noble action presents itself?"

"To tell you the truth, Arthur, I have no great opinion of over-strained magnanimity. The vulgar proverb tells us (and all good proverbs must be vulgar) that we should be just before we are generous. Now I admit, that, in the abstract, you have as much right to dispose of your property in favour of your mother, as Mr. Maudsley in favour of his grandson. But you are a married man."

"Marian has been secretly, but firmly, the abettor of all my plans. You know not how to appreciate the noble disinterestedness of Marian."

"And you are a father!" persisted Dr. Grant, without noticing his interruption; "Yours, therefore, are vested rights. In ceding them, you commit an injury against

your wife and children, which I cannot commend. Your grandfather assigned you no discretion on the subject. He bequeathed Holywell to you and to your heirs; and to all intents and purposes, yours and theirs it is, and must remain. You cannot trifle with their rights."

"In short, you will not stand my friend?"

"I would stand your friend in the best sense of the word, not by coinciding with your caprice. But this is too important an affair for me to advise in singly. You say Lord Rotherham is in possession of the will? Is he also in possession of the contents?"

"Not in the slightest degree. I committed the document to his charge as one of great moment, without explanation of its nature. I was afraid he might judge it necessary to insist on the fulfilment of my grandfather's intentions."

"There! you were absolutely afraid of referring yourself to the judgment of your father's friend! You knew he would give it against

you! Yet you will admit that Mrs. Armytage has no stauncher partizan than Lord Rotherham? You will allow, too, that he is one of the most equitable men in the kingdom?"

"I do, I do! But this is no question of equity, it is one of mere personal inclination. If I and my wife derive higher satisfaction from leaving my mother in possession of Holywell, than from taking possession of it ourselves—"

"Every question is more or less a question of equity," said Dr. Grant. "Even to the tenants on the estate, you owe it that they should be subjected to the control of their lawful landlord. The very leases signed by Mrs. Armytage are null and void; and you, as being cognizant of the fact, make yourself a party to the fraud. Even with regard to the satisfaction you suppose yourself to derive from your act of self-abnegation, answer me truly, Arthur, whether a week have passed since your discovery of your grandfather's will, without your having felt aggrieved by some act of authority

on the part of your mother, which, for the first time, you were inclined to resent as an act of injustice?"

Arthur did *not* answer.—"But after all," cried he, resuming his former position, "since it is my heartfelt desire and Marian's, that things should remain as they are, surely you can have no hesitation in aiding me with your influence?"

"I *have*;—I will not stir in the business without the coalition of our friend Lord Rotherham. In matters merely temporal, he is a better counsellor than myself. Let us go together to Greta Castle, and take his advice."

"We shall lose time. In the state of mind in which my mother parted from me last night, it would not at all surprise me, if she were to quit Holywell in the morning; which must be my excuse for intruding upon you at this unreasonable hour."

"We can start at day-break, *before* day-break if you will; so as to see Lord Rotherham at the earliest hour, and be back before

your mother's usual time of rising. Do not return home; sleep and breakfast here, and I will drive you over in my gig, so that no stir need be made in the family. Mrs. Armytage will not even discover your absence."

"Could we not set off immediately?"

"No, no! Submit to be guided like a reasonable being; or the surmises of half the country will be excited, before you know what you are are about."

Arthur saw that it was vain to resist. At Dr. Grant's suggestion, therefore, he lay down on a sofa, though not to rest; and before six o'clock, was again by the doctor's bedside, imploring him, and this time successfully, to rise and be off. The clock was striking seven when they entered the court-yard of Greta Castle, and startled a yawning stable-boy or two with their premature visitation. The name and authority, however, of two such neighbours as the vicar and heir-apparent of Holywell,—the one a member of the Quorum, the other of the high court of Parliament,

availed to procure them admittance. At their own request, they were installed in Lord Rotherham's dressing-room, and his Lordship apprized of their arrival.

On his appearance, Dr. Grant insisted on taking upon himself the exposition of the affair; for he saw that Arthur was too much excited to be particularly luminous or coherent; and after the first effusions of Lord Rotherham's astonishment, mingled at once with regret and satisfaction,—the packet was produced from the strong closet, the seals broken, the deed examined, verified, and read aloud by Dr. Grant. Not a doubt as to its validity arose in the minds of any of the party; and Lord Rotherham heartily shook hands with Arthur. He found no words to congratulate him on his accession to the estate of his ancestors; but many to express his admiration of the disinterested conduct of his young friend.

"Do not praise him too much," cried Dr. Grant, interrupting the eulogium; "or you

will confirm him in an act of Quixotism, in my opinion uncalled for and unlawful."

And, rather to the regret than surprise of Arthur, Dr. Grant's view of the case was fully seconded by that of Lord Rotherham. The latter, indeed, had been at all times dissatisfied with the social position assigned to young Arthur, the son of the friend of his youth. While venerating the better qualities of Mrs. Armytage, he wholly disapproved her mode of dealing with her children, as well as the unlimited authority with which she had been invested by their father and grandfather. The codicil of Mr. Maudsley's will tallied with his ideas of family justice; and very earnestly did he recommend that the law should be permitted to take its course, modified by every concession of liberality and courtesy towards her who had so long and so ably legislated the estate of Holywell.

"Double your mother's jointure, if you will; —invite her to make Holywell her life resi-

dence, and for yourself seek out another," was his lordship's concluding exhortation; "but do not deceive yourselves or the world. This codicil, or will,—for will it is, to all intents and purposes,—must be proved and registered. The great age of Hardywood, the only surviving witness (who, as having superscribed *both* Mr. Maudsley's wills, and probably various other legal instruments, cannot be supposed to have been aware of their contents, or interested in the suppression of this), renders it necessary that no time should be lost. I will myself undertake the explanation and negotiation of the affair with Mrs. Armytage."

"Rather a thousand times, my dear lord," cried Arthur, "undertake for me a proposal that all shall remain as it has been!"

"The time for the suppression of the will is past," said Dr. Grant, gravely. "Once aware of its existence, I am much mistaken if all the oratory, all the arguments in the world, would induce Mrs. Armytage to connive in

its concealment. Much as she may cling to the conservation of her rights, deeply as her pride may be wounded by the notion of derogation, she will never consent to retain her crown and sceptre by unworthy means. She has as much generosity,—I am wrong,—as much *disinterestedness* of nature as yourself."

"I know it!" was Arthur's desponding reply. "Nevertheless, as Lord Rotherham is so good as to consent to negotiate for me, it is surely unnecessary for him to *suggest* motives of refusal. He may make my proposals in the strongest and most urgent terms, and leave me some chance for the result."

"I will execute your commission; but without either expecting or desiring success," observed Lord Rotherham.

"And *immediately?*" cried the impatient Armytage.

"Immediately."

"If you would consent to dress at once, and drive over to breakfast at Holywell? I am convinced my mother will not remain in

the house an hour longer than she can avoid; and if once she quits it—— "

"Well—well! Away with you, and grant me at least shaving-time," said Lord Rotherham, ringing for his servant. "Expect me at Holywell in an hour."

But, although his friendly promise was fulfilled, he discerned by the mortified countenance with which Arthur came to quit him in the hall, that it was fulfilled in vain. Even previously to his own arrival in company with Dr. Grant, his mother had quitted the house; nay, the very carriage in which she had set off for Thoroton was already returned; and with intelligence that, at the Blue Boar, Mrs. Armytage had entered a chaise and four, and taken the Wolverfield, and, as it was supposed, the London road. She seemed resolved to give all possible publicity to her proceedings.

And whither was she really gone? The little council so warmly disposed in her favour, deliberated in vain as to the best mode

of overtaking or befriending her. Her son became almost frantic with vexation and remorse on learning that, previously to quitting the house, she had assembled the establishment in the hall, apprized them that she was compelled to quit her native roof, and taken a solemn leave of the family.

The results, too, of her harangue soon became apparent. Even before Lord Rotherham quitted the house, on his return to Greta Castle, the united members of the household came in a body to Arthur to request their dismissal; and red eyes and heavy footsteps attested the sincerity of the grief with which they had witnessed the abdication of their austere but justice-dealing mistress. The new master of Holywell seemed likely to be left—

> "Alone, beside the solitary hearth
> Where all his household gods lay shatter'd round him,"

with no menial allegiance at his immediate disposal, save that of Mademoiselle Celestine, and Mouton, the Poodle.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Well—well—the world revolves upon its axis,
And all mankind turn with it—heads and tails;
We live and love—make war and pay our taxes;
And, as the veering wind shifts,—shift our sails.

BYRON.

DECEMBER, gloomy December, had now made his appearance in the country, crawling with his usual sullen pace and arrayed in his customary mantle of snow; seemingly unconscious that three families, at least, of the West Riding, were inflamed to fever heat by the unseasonable caloric of family discord; the Wemmersleys raging for the defection of their rich uncle from Carolina, and refusing to be comforted,—Holywell divided against itself,—and the Grange, the torpid, obsolete, uneventful Grange, distracted by mysterious commotions and inexplicable afflictions.

Lord Wildingham was, in fact, less mistaken than may have been inferred, in his belief that his devotions had produced a favourable impression on the feelings of Rosamond Devonport. Educated as she had been in strict retirement, to her his faults were less obvious than to other people; her mind remaining unbiassed by conventional rules or the verdicts of that Lord-Chief-Justice,—the ermine-rolled Great World. Even as Wyndham Spalding,—even as the perpetrator of pyebald English, and the wearer of fancy waistcoats, *she* discerned nothing disagreeable in the handsome young Lord, who thought and spoke her so fair. It was in vain that Mistress Di abused him as a Spalding, or Miss Avarilla anathematized him as a material, unintellectual being; Rose persisted in thinking him very captivating, very entertaining. Deriving from nature (rather than La Rochefoucault) the axiom that old men and young women cannot talk of love without making themselves ridiculous, she had been keenly

alive to the absurdity of Leonidas Lomax's addresses, and willing to resign them to Di or Penelope, as she or he thought proper. Even when Lord Downham, the superannuated Cupid, "came, saw," and smiled,—he did not "conquer" at the Grange; Miss Devonport, seeing him so devotedly in love with himself, could not fancy he would ever sincerely attach himself to a wife.

But when Lord Wildingham, immediately on his accession of fortune and independence, in defiance of the opposition of the Maranham's family,—in defiance of surly porters and gaunt mastiffs, found means to assure her that, although now his own master, he was more than ever her slave, Rose became confirmed in her preference, and made no secret of it to her spinster guardians. In vain did Avarilla rant and Diana rave; in vain did the more persuasive voice of the infirm Margaret, faltering with emotion, implore their young charge to beware of the frailty of her own heart, and the ascendency of human passion. Rose pro-

mised to be docile to their authority,—to marry only with their consent; but she had not courage to deny herself the happiness of an interview with Lord Wildingham, whenever he found means to reach the green terrace sheltered by the feathering beech trees. Her attachment, in short, heightened by opposition apparently inconsistent and irrational, hourly increased. Lord Wildingham avowed with so much candour the faults and follies of his past life, and seemed to attach such earnest hopes of happiness to his influence over her affections, that it was impossible to withhold the confession that his love was warmly and even gratefully returned. Rosamond admitted her promise never to marry without the consent of her guardians; but invited him to wait patiently for a change of opinion on the part of her friends.

Overpowering, therefore, was her surprise, when Lord Wildingham, at their next interview, acquainted her that his father had absolutely interdicted their union. He protested, indeed,

and with a degree of emotion affording ample attestation of his sincerity, that no other woman should ever become his wife, that his prospects in life were blighted for ever; but took his leave, announcing an intention to quit Yorkshire, to quit England, to become a vagrant and an outcast; an intention, in short, to see the face he loved, no more.

Even had it been the purpose of Rosamond Devonport to conceal from her protectresses the results of this painful explanation, the effects of a first affliction upon her youthful frame must have rendered further secresy impossible. Hers was no common, London young lady-like affection, springing up in the hotbed of flirtation, amid the jangling of orchestras or the perfume of forced exotics; cherished for half a season, to be dismissed the next, in order to make way for the prospects of a better match. It was a genuine first-love—the great event of a pure and secluded life—destined, like the poison-draught fermenting in a goblet of Venice, to break the unsullied

crystal in which it was contained. It soon transpired in the neighbourhood that Miss Devonport had been attacked with delirious fever; her life was said to be despaired of; and though Lady Rotherham persisted in declaring that *she* had always foreseen mischief from the autumnal vapours of the stagnant moat at the Grange, the lady-guardians knew better, and had already gathered from the unconscious lips of their protégée an admission that despair was sinking her to the grave.

And now it became their turn to tremble; for, although the iron frame of Mistress Di laughed to scorn all mortal ailments, having survived five falls from her horse, such as might have pounded into dust the Irish giant or Jack Baltimore,—while Miss Avarilla, enhanced in the mysteries of the homœopathic system, defied both death and doctors,—yet the untimely end of the gentle Sophia Armytage was too recent, and its cause too generally suspected to admit of their making light of

the influence of a broken heart. They trembled, but talked long and loudly while they trembled, — scolded each other and all the household, — overcome by apprehensions for the fate of one whom, in spite of all their old-maidenly peevishness, they loved and valued above all on earth.

But there was one member of the family who neither trembled nor scolded, nor even wept, while kneeling in motionless despair beside the bed of the unhappy Rosamond,—yet whose sympathy was of a far deeper nature than could relieve itself in words. The infirm, wasted Margaret seemed to recover vigour of mind and body in order to watch over the sufferer, to minister to her wants, to soothe her incoherence. *Her* arm supported the weary head,—*her* eye stirred not from the altered countenance,—*her* ear was alive to the merest murmur emanating from the parched lips. Margaret Maranham found presence of mind, whenever some desperate crisis of Rosamond's disorder demanded self-possession in

her attendants,—strength to constrain, power to subdue; she thought for them all,—she felt for Rose alone. But, above all, she even found courage to despatch the following letter of appeal and explanation to the Duke of Spalding.

"The Grange, December —, 183–.

"More than thirty years have elapsed since I last addressed you; and at that period a letter from my hand was not without its influence over your feelings. May it prove so now! Changed as we are, may Heaven still grant me the gift of interesting your friendship; for on your will to do me service, depend not only *my* life and happiness, but a life far dearer than my own. Yes! why should I deny it? I am a mother; and I sue to you for the preservation of my child!

"For the first time I begin to reproach myself with the estrangement which the wounded pride of my family first called into existence between us. Heaven knows I cherished no

resentment against you. The obstacle that parted us was as much of my creation as your own; and if the arts of others induced you to act upon the instigations of my petulance, I forgave you, Wyndham, fully forgave you from the moment the world assured me you were happy in the affections of another.

"We were both so young, at the moment of that first attachment: you, escaping the vigilance of your tutor and your mother, found attraction in a giddy girl of your own age, ever ready to welcome you to the Grange, which presented so ready a resource for your truancy; I,—tyrannized by my elder sister, despised by my younger,—was equally touched by your affections. It were vain now to conjecture *which* loved best: who first *ceased* to love is a matter of no question.

"I do believe that when first you assured me the difference in our religious faith need form no obstacle to our union, you spoke in the sincerity of your heart; for, appreciating the strength of your influence over my mind,

you fancied *your* persuasions capable of estranging me from God himself; while I—blind and miserable that I was!—doubted not that my eloquence, the eloquence of affection, would serve to win you into what I hold to be the way of salvation. Perhaps, I might have succeeded,—yes! Wyndham, perhaps I might have eventually succeeded; had not another devoted herself to the task of pleasing you, triumphed in the attempt, and left me alone in the world; oh! how desolately alone!

"My young heart swelled within me on perusing your letter, stating your conviction that marriage between two persons differing in the forms of their Christian profession could be productive only of mutual misery; for already I had heard from others of the nets spread for you,—of the gilded cage into which you had been deluded,—that you were prepared to abandon me, *not* for the love of God, but for the love of another! And all was soon verified, and I was left to my tears,—to tears that fell not for the loss of a distinguished

position in the world, but for the loss of Wyndham — the beloved Wyndham — with whom I had so often wandered beneath the spreading beech-trees,—he who had been all in all to *me*, and to whom I once fondly flattered myself I was all in all!

"To my father, the disappointment conveyed by your change of sentiment was of a different nature. Sir Wolstan regarded you with interest as the affianced lover of his favourite child; but, with somewhat more than interest, as the anticipated proselyte of a faith dear at once to his piety and his pride. Your conversion to Catholicism had been sanguinely predicted at the Grange; and what was deemed your apostacy, was now reviled as a crime. Even my sisters, little as they desired to see me attain so eminent a rank in life, mourned over the dishonour that had fallen upon their father's house. And when, after a few years of marriage, of marriage with your Protestant bride, rumours reached us that you were less happy in your house than might have been

expected from its numerous endowments, your disappointments excited little sympathy in the family of Maranham.

"Among other mischiefs with which my sisters did not fail to upbraid you, was the breaking up of my father's health. Sir Wolstan's constitution had long been undermined; and the unuttered bitterness with which he resented the slight offered to his favourite child, assuredly tended to accelerate the progress of the disorder. He took a dislike to the house of his ancestors. The Grange was too near Spalding Court for his comfort; and the rejoicings of the neighbourhood, when sons were born to you, or royal favours conceded, filled him with disgust. Year after year, he grew more morose, more discontented; he was even too much engrossed by his vexations to note that his once dear Margaret had become feeble, wasted, wan, cheerless, and despairing as himself.

"At length, (it was about five years after your marriage, and, when chance had brought you in contact with my family, it was already

triumphantly noted, that you too were dispirited and ill at ease,) my father resolved to remove from Yorkshire to Bath. He fancied the waters might benefit his health; my sisters looked to the gaieties of the place for relaxation; and I, too, was content to quit the spot where I had loved and suffered,—where I was continually hearing of your domestic cares, without the power of ministering to their consolation. I had a friend, an old convent friend, married and settled in the neighbourhood of Bath, from whose society I expected to derive more comfort than from the grudging regard of my sisters.

"Our expectations were fully satisfied. My father's health improved, my sisters intermingled without reserve in the society of the city; while I was permitted to pass weeks and even months at Oakstone, the seat of my friend Mrs. Meynell. My story was fully known to her; and, aware of the blight which had fallen on my early affections, it did not surprise her that though scarcely more than five and twenty,

my demeanour should have been sobered and my prospects contracted,—that I should shrink from a career of vulgar dissipation, and find my chief pleasure in her society. Nevertheless Oakstone was not solitary; situated midway between Bath and Bristol, the house was enlivened by a rapid succession of visitors, by most of whom I was regarded as a sickly hypochondriac, old beyond my years, gloomy beyond excuse.

"Among the favourite guests, however, was one, several years my junior, the son of an Irish Baronet of ancient family, whose broken fortunes had compelled him to seek a provision in trade. From the first day of his arrival, Robert O'Moran devoted his attentions to me; and, with a degree of impetuosity savouring of infatuation, seemed to glory in the display of his passion. Mrs. Meynell, as an excuse perhaps for my coldness, acquainted him with the peculiarities of my situation. But the assertion that I had loved and still loved another, whom, as she chose to declare, I had rejected from a

religious scruple, seemed only to inflame his attachment. The reserve of my deportment, indeed, forbade a positive declaration of his sentiments; and trusting, on my own part, to make him aware of the hopelessness of his pretensions, without suffering things to come to a crisis, I assumed towards him an air of sisterly regard, which I hoped might enable me to enjoy the society of a person I esteemed, without subjecting me to the persecutions of his wild attachment.

"For a time O'Moran appeared to comprehend and coincide in my views; but, during a whole summer, he found unceasing pretexts for joining our parties at Oakstone. Not a wish did I express, but he contrived that it should be instantly fulfilled. The mercantile house with which he was connected, was engaged in various foreign speculations, affording him the means of gratifying caprices, such as I might have avowed in all safety, in presence of any other person. New works, rare flowers, tropcial birds, found their way to Oakstone.

In all his words and actions, there existed a degree of romantic enthusiasm, singularly at variance with the plodding duties of his sober vocation.

"O'Moran had given me to understand that he professed the same creed as myself; and the name and Milesian origin of his family rendered this so probable, that I entertained no doubt on the subject. I saw, however, that he was not only a careless Catholic, but a careless Christian,—that religious duties occupied no share of his attention; and, on this point, especially interested myself to obtain an influence over his feelings. Absorbed for years by a disappointed passion, I little dreamed that my feelings could ever change towards a headstrong lover; but after being subjected for months to the devotedness, the disinterestedness of his homage, I found myself the first to regret his absence, whenever he departed from Oakstone,—the first to rejoice in his return.

"At length he discerned,—perhaps at the

suggestion of my friend, Mrs. Meynell, who, aware of my unpleasant position with my sisters, certainly favoured his views, — the advantage he had obtained. He pressed his suit warmly,—generously,—eagerly; and the only objection that presented itself was the impossibility of obtaining my father's consent to my union with a person engaged in commercial employments. 'Your family, I am aware, is ancient as my own,' said I; 'but the prejudiced pride of Sir Wolstan and my sisters will see only the Bristol merchant in the son of Sir Emilius O'Moran.'

"'But you are of an age to judge for yourself,' replied Robert; 'and you are independent,—for, Heaven knows, I seek no fortune with your hand! Give it me, my precious Margaret;—give me only a legal right to call you mine, and let time reconcile your father to the match.'

"To reconcile my father to the match was, I knew, a hopeless project; my father, who had indulged in expectations of beholding his

favourite daughter the bride of the Duke of Spalding!

"At that moment I received a letter couched in no gracious terms, recalling me to Bath. My sisters wrote, reproaching me with my preference for the low society frequenting Oakstone; and I understood at once to whom and what they alluded. Bitter, I foresaw, were the taunts that awaited me; and O'Moran, distracted at the prospect of a separation fatal to his hopes, grew more vehement than ever,—prostrated himself at my feet, — wept, — threatened, — implored, and finally obtained my consent, and the sanction of my imprudent friend, to our clandestine marriage. There was no difficulty in obtaining the services of the priest attached to the household of Mrs. Meynell:—the usual forms of confession previous to the administration of the Holy Sacrament of Marriage, were duly observed by both parties; and, in the domestic chapel of Oakstone, in presence of my friend and a confidential servant, I became

the wife of Robert O'Moran. Five days elapsed in mutual security;—when an angry letter of recall from my father rendered indispensable my return to Bath.

"Never had I found his peevish despotism so hard to support;—never had the overbearing temper of my elder, or the sarcastic bitterness of my younger sister, so overpowered my feelings as now;—when all their insinuations, nay, even open invectives, were directed against him who was secretly my husband. O'Moran and myself had devised measures for a private correspondence, and my sole consolation arose from the power of pouring forth to him the history of my domestic vexations. I was compelled to own that my hope of reconciling my father to the idea of our union grew daily more remote; and when, in the course of a few weeks, Robert continued to visit me privately at Bath, it was agreed between us that, after a month's further attempt, I should avow the truth, and hazard the penalty of my disobedience. Within that

period, however, when approaching one evening to the fatal subject, in general conversation with my family, I happened to allude to the O'Morans as professing the same ancient faith with ourselves,—

"'You either deceive yourself, or you would deceive *us*,' replied my sister Amarilla. 'I have taken repeated occasion to inquire into the circumstances of the family. The O'Morans are Protestants—Orangeites—beggars! One daughter ran off from Cheltenham with the son of a Gloucestershire clothier; the other is married to a Demerara planter. One son is a refugee in America,—one a nobleman's agent,—and one a Bristol slopseller.'

"'All these particulars may be true,' I calmly replied, 'with the exception of the first. Sir Emilius O'Moran may be a beggar, but he is unquestionably a Roman Catholic.'

"Again my assertion was denied; and in such contemptuous terms, that I resolved to apply to my husband for written confirmation of the fact. But O'Moran was absent when

my letter reached Bristol,—having, indeed, previously apprized me that the affairs of his house would necessitate a fortnight's excursion to Guernsey; and, during the delay produced by this inopportune expedition, miserable presentiments began to prey upon my mind. At length his answer arrived. It was dated from St. Heliers; and the first words that met my eye—'I have deceived you! Forgive me, my most beloved Margaret, for having hazarded the only protest which could make you mine;—I am indeed a member of the Protestant church!' confirmed my worst apprehensions. On the very day the tidings reached me that I had no legal—no spiritual claim upon a husband, I obtained the certainty that I was to become a mother! Wyndham, judge of the agony of my feelings!"

CHAPTER XIX.

And yet he with no feigned delight
Had wooed the maiden day and night—
Had loved her night and morn.
How could he choose but love a maid
Whose heart by Nature's hand was swayed,—
So kind, and so forlorn?

WORDSWORTH.

"OVERWHELMED by the consciousness of my situation — excited to the highest degree against him to whom I had sacrificed myself, as against a profaner of the most sacred mysteries of my faith, it was impossible for me to disguise the truth from my sisters. I avowed all. I threw myself on their protection—I threw myself on their mercy,—and, on condition that I would submit to be governed by their judgment, obtained from them a promise of aid in concealing from my father facts which, I doubted not, would bring his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave.

Their first measure was to return, unopened, the subsequent letters of O'Moran; then next, to procure for me an obscure refuge, where my shame might be hidden, and the pursuit of my betrayer evaded. This was successfully achieved; and my father became reconciled to my absence by the belief that, at the instigation of my wiser sisters, I had resolved to withdraw from the importunities of an admirer so distasteful to my family. O'Moran, therefore, on presenting himself some weeks afterwards at my father's house, for explanation, was denied admittance; and, on forcing an entrance, violently expelled. The protection of the law was at length claimed by my family against his intrusion; till, baffled in every attempt to obtain intelligence of me, he became excited to frenzy,—attempted his own life,—and when, in due time, I gave birth to a daughter,—the child of honourable parents, and yet a child of shame,—its unhappy father, under the protection of his own family, was the inmate of a lunatic asylum!

"And thus, by the blindness of my resentment, I had inflicted an irreparable injury on my unhappy babe; for had I, in the first instance, essayed the effect of firmness, alike with my family and my husband, our marriage might have been legalized previously to the birth of my poor Rosamond. But now, all was hopeless! It had become impossible to break the secret to my father; while my sisters, by the assistance afforded me in concealing my disgrace, had obtained an ascendancy over my conduct, never thenceforward to be broken.

"Miserable as were my prospects on every side, my most poignant anguish arose from the necessity of separation from my child—my little comforter—whose existence still gave me strength to struggle with the cares of life. During the survival of my father, I was able to see her but by stealth, and at rare intervals; yet rare as they were, they enabled me to bear and forbear. My health failed—my strength deserted me—my courage never!

'Trust to us' had been, from the first, the promise of my sisters; 'and at some future time, this unfortunate pledge of our family dishonour shall dwell under our roof, and be unto us as a daughter. Submit to the concealment necessary for the preservation of our credit in the eyes of the world,—submit to let her be regarded as a ward,—an adopted child,—and she shall never want the care of a parent.'

"Sir Wolstan died within a twelvemonth, bequeathing the absolute control of his property to my elder sister; and how could I resist? I had not the means of giving bread to the child. Had we quitted the Grange, we must have lain down by the way-side, and perished together: and for *her* sake I submitted to renounce the precious name of mother; contenting myself to behold her grow up in my presence as in the presence of a stock or stone. She was the darling of every heart—of every eye. All others might love and caress her; *I* alone was obliged to place a restraint upon my feelings, lest the world

should detect that the hand placed in benediction on her head, or the tears that fell upon her little cheek, were those of a mother!

"Sometimes, the very child herself was startled by the impassioned tenderness of my endearments, when for a moment we were alone together. 'What makes you love me so very, *very* much?' she would say in her sweet prattlings:—'Mistress Di pats me on the shoulder; Miss Avarilla places me on her knee; but *you* hold me to your heart. What makes *you* love me so much more than the rest?' At other moments, I felt obliged to reprehend—nay, even chastise the creature I so tenderly cherished, lest the truth should be made manifest. My sisters protested that the excess of my motherly affection was continually breaking forth, and that I should surely, sooner or later, be the means of making known the illegitimacy of the child; they even required that Rosamond should not be educated under our roof,—in order to give less colour to the surmises of the world.

"During the period of her absence, the poor sick, infirm, martyrized being who had alternately smiled and wept over her cradle, bore with the weariness of life in the expectation of again pressing her to her bosom: some trifle of her apparel—a glove—a ribbon—being treasured there like a relique, till I was once more blessed with her presence! And thus, she grew to womanhood; while, every year, my tenderness assumed a more painful development. I began to feel that my Rosamond was worse than an orphan. Should she chance to place her young affections aspiringly, how grievous might be the mortification entailed upon her! I could neither suffer her to go to the altar under a false designation, nor find courage to declare the truth to the man her gentle qualities might attract to honour her with his hand!

"Heaven knows, I desired not to fix her destinies in the loftier ranks of life! I trusted that some humble individual of noble mind might be tempted by her beauty, her virtues,

her accomplishments, to overlook the misfortune of her birth; and when your son Lord Downham visited the Grange, it was my entreaty that no encouragement might be given to the sons of the Duke of Spalding. Lord Wyndham followed—(the name brought tears into my eyes and a pang into my heart!)—and still I persevered in my interdiction. He was denied the house,—avoided,—almost insulted by my sister; still, he persevered. And now came my great trial; for, I perceived that, from the moment of his first visit, Rosamond was no longer the same person. *She*, too, was under the spell of that name once so precious to her mother! I saw her grow reserved, fractious, unhappy; a thousand miseries were preparing for my child!

"It was time she should be warned, and that a moment's present pain should redeem her from years of disappointment. I took her, therefore, into my arms and told her all,—all my sorrows, all my shame! But my revelation came too late; for, instead of the rapturous

exclamations with which I had long trusted she would welcome the intelligence that she was loved and watched over by a living mother, —Rosamond answered me only with the name of 'Wyndham.' Already, I had forfeited her affections. That very morning, they had met in secret; she knew herself to have been rejected by the Duke of Spalding. And the mystery was now explained. She was the offspring of guilt,—despised, cut off, contemned. How could she find forgiveness for her unhappy mother!

"Wyndham! my child sickened even unto death under her mortification. She is still at the brink of the grave! All I have lived for, —all I have suffered for,—all I have sorrowed for,—is vanishing from my grasp! My fair girl—my gentle girl—she over whom I have watched and wept during her sleep, with such grievous yearnings of heart,—is going down to the grave, guiltless of all but loving one who loves her, as once his father seemed to love her most unhappy mother! Wyndham!—

must this be? Is the past so utterly forgotten? I reproach you not — have never reproached you! I do but supplicate,—humbling myself in the dust at your feet,—and praying for the life so far more dear to me than my own! Have mercy in exchange for her blighted youth; Margaret entreats you to have mercy!

"M. M."

The lapse of a few hours after the perusal of this touching appeal, sufficed to convey the Duke of Spalding to the Grange. Nearly thirty years had elapsed since he last quitted it—young, handsome, gay. He was now in the decline of life,—without the consciousness of past happiness, or of prosperity virtuously employed, to brighten the prospects of age; and it was a trying thing for the self-accusing man to hold in his own the withered hand,—withered by time and care,—which, at their last meeting, had been pledged to his by vows of mutual affection.

What passed at their singular reunion never transpired: but on the following day, Lord Wildingham, summoned by his father, made his appearance at the Grange. "If," said the Duke, "your sole motive for breaking off your engagement with Miss Devonport be your submission to my will, receive her at my hands as your wife. Accident alone revealed to *you* the secret of her birth,—it is still a mystery to the world. Let it remain so,—and, should any presume to question the eligibility of the connexion, tell them, my dear Wyndham, that she is the adopted child of your father. I will bestow her upon you at the altar;—*I* undertake her acceptance in my family. Those who affect to slight Lady Wildingham, must display their ungraciousness towards my daughter-in-law elsewhere than under my roof."

Thus encouraged, it is not to be supposed that the happy Wyndham was slow in the renewal of his suit,—thus cheered, it is not

surprising that Rosamond's health should rapidly improve.

Her mother by her side,—her lover at her feet,—the Duke of Spalding, enchanted with her gentle simplicity of manners, retracing in herself all the charms of his early love, Rosamond was the happiest of the happy. Joy prevailed at the venerable Manor. The old ladies had been too much shaken by apprehension of losing the darling of their house, to trouble themselves with the politics or the enmities of Spalding Court. Their triumph was complete;—they forgot to scold,—they almost forgot to prose,—or prosed only concerning the brilliant prospects of their darling, the future Lady Wildingham of Wildingham!

CHAPTER XX.

May ye live
To see another, as I see you now,
Deck'd in your rights, as you are stall'd in mine!
SHAKSPEARE.

MANY anxious hours were devoted, at Holywell, to consultation between Arthur Armytage and his two counsellors, ending in a determination that he should set out, on the following day, to trace, stage by stage, the route pursued by his mother. But the early part of the morrow brought tidings rendering the expedition superfluous. A letter, written from an inn on the road, acquainted her son that she was about to take refuge with her nearest relative at Maudsley Hall, till the law should decide upon their adverse pretensions.

Arthur was deeply hurt. Mrs. Armytage seemed resolved to look upon and treat with

him as with an enemy, as well as to draw the notice of the world upon their differences; to expose him to the mal-interpretation and enmity of their family connexions, and create a party against his interests. Not for a moment, however, did he feel tempted to swerve from his generous intentions in her favour. He even tried to persuade himself that his own unguarded violence, in their last interview, afforded a pretext for her present animosity. But, as her letter expressed a determination to hold no communication with him, in person or by letter, till the great question of the will should have been legally decided, it was the opinion of his friends that he must not at present hazard the attempt. Dr. Grant reluctantly consented to proceed in his stead to Maudsley Hall, and lay before her the wishes and projects of her son.

But at this interview Mrs. Armytage showed herself even more inflexible than might have been anticipated. Although, on hearing Dr. Grant's opinion that the validity of Mr.

Maudsley's will was unimpregnable, even the worldly-wise Sir John strenuously advised her to come to terms with the heir, and take the goods the gods seemed disposed to provide her, she would listen to no proposals of compromise. She had instructed Messrs. Pennett and Nebwell to hold themselves in readiness for examination and resistance, when the will might be tendered for probate. The law was to be her criterion, her Alpha and Omega. Either she would reign by right at Holywell, or set foot within its gates no more. If defeated, she would accept the dower provided for her by her father's vacillating sense of justice, not a shilling more;—not a shilling from her son.

She did not, however, lack discernment to discover the mean-spirited embarrassment of her Baronet kinsman, at being thus involved in family discords. Still regarding himself, so long as Arthur Armytage remained sonless, as heir presumptive to Holywell, it was essential to him, whatsoever king might reign

over the estate, to remain planted on the footsteps of the throne; and very heartily did he wish, and very plainly make his wish apparent, that Mrs. Armytage had chosen to set up her rest on other territories than his own. It was his intention still to pass his Doncaster week at Holywell; and the high-minded lady no sooner discovered his sneaking overtures of amity to Arthur, than she departed for London,—that vast emporium of universal selfishness, where a man's banker stands him in lieu of family and friends, and the ties of consanguinity are superseded by the bonds of Chili and Peru.

Yet, even amid the hospitable courtesies of Fenton's Hotel, came the sense of loneliness—of the lack of human love;—reminiscences of the daughter she had sacrificed—the son she had rejected; and amid them all, the sentence of Messrs. Pennett and Nebwell, of Essex Street, Strand, that Lushington, Swabey, and a whole legion of high practitioners of the black art, had decided her father's will to

be valid, and operative in every point of law.

To the probability of such a consummation, Mrs. Armytage had wantonly blinded herself. Strong-minded as she was, her insane sense of self-consequence had overpowered her usual discrimination. She had not reckoned it among the possibilities of things that *she* could be degraded from her high estate. She had ruled her father — husband—daughter—son ;—controlled a parish—influenced a county;—she fancied herself a match for destiny itself!

And now, how pitiful a change! Diminished to that shadow of a shade—a jointured dowager —without a home—without authority—without influence; what vestige remained of all the elements of her former pride! The very domestics of her days of grandeur, too old and decrepit to adhere to her fallen fortunes, had vanished away into several homes of their own, to rest from their labours, and enjoy the fruits of their long servitude. Dr. Grant and Lord Rotherham had mortally offended her

by showing themselves the friends of her son. The Maudsleys she regarded as pitiful apostates: the very Maranhams (and at present she knew not the cause of their pre-occupation) had given her no sign or token of interest from the moment of her quitting Holywell. The whole world had deserted her—the whole world had rejected her. Her haughtiness had met with its reward. She had sowed the wind to reap the whirlwind!

But this was not all. Dr. Grant had not been premature in remarking to Arthur, when addressing him at Scarborough, a melancholy change in his mother's health and appearance. She was indeed suffering from one of the most painful of physical afflictions. A trifling accident, sustained in the course of her attendance on Sophia, had developed a latent tendency to disease; and when the peaceful departure of her daughter at length afforded her leisure to consider ailments of her own, Mrs. Armytage recognized in herself, and recognized with joy, the symptoms of a mortal disorder.

It was at the moment of that discovery, she had written to Arthur in so mild a spirit towards himself, his wife, his child,—inviting their return from Scarborough to Holywell. At this period she did not wish to live. Although nothing would have forced from her lips a confession of repentance, the consciousness of her own unintentional but blamable ministry in the death of her child, weighed heavily on her soul: and neither Arthur, nor even Rainsford, could revile her former obstinacy more bitterly than, in moments of solitude, she was tempted to revile herself!

Till Sophia had departed from her, she had not been aware of half the happiness to be derived from companionship with that gentle being! From the moment of her husband's death, her daughter had scarcely been parted an hour from her side; and though Mrs. Armytage's loftiness of spirit seemed to elevate her high above all sympathy with the timid girl, as the giant oak above all consciousness of the fragrant violet bloom-

ing at its root,—yet now that the flower was withered, the tree seemed desolate; for winter was around its leafless boughs.

Recognizing all this, she had been content to die; but suddenly the scene was changed. Even the indignation excited against Marian by Mr. Wemmersley's exaggerated and mischievous representations, had wrought an alteration in her feelings. The notion that, when she was gone, the name of Mrs. Armytage of Holywell would be worn by a corrupt and shameless woman, inspired her with the desire of recovery. But when she found her kingdom taken from her, and felt herself an object of commiseration to the world, she trembled lest quick-following symptoms of decay should induce her former friends to fancy she was sinking a victim to change of circumstances. Even to the very verge of the shadow of death, she was pursued by the instigations of her haughty temper!

"No!" she would exclaim, as she paced the cheerless solitude of her drawing-room at Fen-

ton's, "they shall not say I was overcome by mortification. Consideration for the feelings of others prevented my disclosing the precarious state of my health, before I was cast out upon the world by my son; I will not declare it *now*—as if to render myself an object of compassion. I will live till the great wonder of Mrs. Armytage's humiliation is forgotten; I will live, that none may triumph over my seeming feebleness of mind! An operation, they say, may prolong my life. A little month ago, and I should have scorned the attempt; but now, existence has acquired value in my eyes. A life of agony were welcome, compared with the certainty that every fool would cry out over my grave,—'She fretted for her loss of fortune, —she had not fortitude to survive her humiliation.'"

Tortured by pain, and still more by the efforts necessary to repress its expression, she rejected, with hourly encreasing bitterness, every affectionate, every submissive overture of her son; till Arthur, unaware of any pecu-

liarly existing cause, at length coincided in the opinion of his friends, Dr. Grant and the Earl, that he should leave her unmolested to recover the effects of the stunning blow she had undergone ; then try the effect of a sudden personal interview. He therefore desisted from his importunities—the Rotherhams ceased to write —Dr. Grant was silent. Through life Mrs. Armytage had kept aloof from London and its coteries; and even had she been now inclined to renew the ties of scattered acquaintanceship, the town was still empty—still deserted. She knew no one, was visited by no one. Her medical attendant, to whom alone her afflicting sufferings were divulged, daily advised her to seek the relief of cheerful society, without for an instant suspecting that a woman of distinguished family and fortune could find it more difficult to realize his moral prescription, than his recipes for decoctions of iodine or belladonna; while her lawyer, compassionating his client's manifest isolation, and relieved in his personal awe of Mrs. Armytage, to the amount

of thirteen thousand four hundred pounds and a fraction per annum, ventured to take the liberty of leaving "Mrs. Samuel Nebwell's" visiting card on her table, with an invitation to a family dinner in Southampton Buildings!

It was not, however, these degradations which, in the course of a week or two, determined Mrs. Armytage, without further announcement to her friends and family, to depart for the Continent. She wished to be out of the way of observation,—she wished to be still more lonesomely alone. Aware that the French practitioners are said to exercise peculiar skill in the operation to which she had determined to subject herself, she resolved that it should be performed by a stranger and among strangers. She made preparations for immediate departure to Paris, and, with all her misanthropic gloominess of spirit, it *did* for a moment chill her to the heart, when her personal attendant, she who for five-and-twenty years had been her diligent handmaiden, refused to be the companion of her mistress's

foreign expedition, and expressed a determination to retire from her service.

"I am now alone!"—was the ejaculation of Mrs. Armytage, as she stationed herself on the deck of the vessel that was to bear her from the native land in which she had so long prided herself; the land which contained the birth-place of her fathers, the grave of her child; "alone,—utterly alone; diseased, dishonoured; without so much as a dog that caressed me in my days of prosperity, to follow me into exile!—No matter! the soul within me is still mighty to struggle with my enemies. No one shall boast of having triumphed over my spirit; no one shall boast of having witnessed a sense of humiliation in Caroline Armytage!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Welcome ever smiles,
And farewell goes out sighing!

SHAKSPEARE.

ARTHUR, meanwhile, deeply affected in heart and spirits by the resentment of his mother, had subjected himself to a severity of self-accusation, which appeared unreasonable, even to the most conscientious of his friends. Had he been aware of the *real* situation of Mrs. Armytage, bitter indeed had been his remorse that her fast-declining years should have been afflicted by his rashness; but, as it was, he suffered himself to be comforted by the assurance of the Rotherhams that, already in possession of means to command the comforts of life, and aware that her son had placed under her banker's control half of his annual

income, she would, in the course of a few months, relax from her animosity,—accept the olive-branch so dutifully tendered,—and become a visitor, if not an inmate, at Holywell-Park.

This point once settled in his mind, Arthur had little leisure for lamentations. Immediately on obtaining probate of the will, he had forwarded to the solicitors of Mrs. Armytage a discharge in full of all her accounts,—all her liabilities; and had now only to turn his thoughts to the care of carrying on his establishment on a creditable footing, at a moiety of the former expenditure. Nor did this sweeping Joseph Humeian reduction appear impossible; for Mrs. Armytage, though expansive in her views and prudent in her system, was at best only such a manager as can be found in the best of managing women, obstinately attached to their own plans, yet guided with a thread by the first adroit manœuvrer. The retirement of the gang of invalid domestics, even with the liberal pen-

sion allotted to each by their young master, proved a considerable advantage; for the peculations systematically carried on, under the eyes of those who were blind, and subject to the chastisement of hands that were impotent, became totally suppressed under a more efficient administration.

In the neighbourhood, Arthur had ever been a favourite. His unassuming manners, cheerful good-humour, and filial respect towards the most despotic of mothers, had won golden opinions for him. With the wise, the esteem of such men as Dr. Grant and Lord Rotherham, pleaded forcibly in his favour. With the foolish, the good graces of the Duchess of Spalding exercised similar influence. Marian (Mrs. Arthur no longer, but, in her own right, Mrs. Armytage, of Holywell) was seen to be so pretty, and known to be so good, and afforded, in her unpretending simplicity, so pleasing a contrast to her predecessor, that even Thoroton—factious, discontented, envious Thoroton—applauded; while the ungrateful

parish of Holywell raised its hypocritical hand, and blessed its stars that the tyranny of Caroline the Great was overpast.

So it is in most kingdoms and countries, in the dawning of a new reign! Their Majesties went here and there, cheered by universal acclamations. Thoroton rejoiced to find itself represented by a man with a rent-roll of fifteen thousand a-year, while the high-mightinesses of the Riding, who had never been altogether satisfied with the necessity of conceding a leading voice in the Diet to a petticoat sovereign—a duodecimo Maria Theresa—glorying at finding the pragmatic sanction rescinded, heartily huzzaed Arthur Armytage into their councils. Fortunately, Dr. Grant was at hand, with his prudent moderation, to open the eyes of the young heir to the hollowness of all these protestations—all these proffered leagues of amity.

By a singular coincidence, the fortunes of the worthy doctor himself, or of those whom he loved better than himself, his children, were

importantly affected by the establishment of the will. The property of Sophia Armytage, a third of which she had bequeathed to the two little girls reared in a great measure under her superintendence, had thus been raised from ten to five-and-thirty thousand pounds; nearly twelve thousand of which became the portion of Mary and Clara. It was in vain Dr. Grant protested that Miss Armytage, in making the bequest, had contemplated no such addition; and that, in equity, the legacy should stand at its original amount: Arthur assured him in all sincerity, that had his sister been aware of the real state of her brother's fortunes, and of the rights of his little girl, she would probably have augmented rather than diminished the provision for her *protégées*. His opinion moreover was backed by that of Lord Rotherham, and that of Lord Rotherham by the laws of the realm; and Dr. Grant was forced to see his children become rich, without having compromised, by the slightest blemish, his own uprightness and independence.

Among the families of the Riding, though scarcely one but was well content to exchange the old neighbour for the new one, (the transition having been effected without loss of life or loss of respectability in the family) an indecent degree of satisfaction was exhibited only in a single instance. The Duchess of Spalding did not show herself a generous enemy. Her letter of congratulation to Marian, on coming to her estate, was as exuberantly triumphant, as had been her verbal congratulations to the Dowager Lady Marscourt, on getting rid of her daughter. Overwhelmed by the happiness of so joyful an occasion, she announced her intention of passing a week at Spalding Court, so soon as she could tear herself away from the gaieties of Brighton, and the endearments of Sir Leon and Lady Marscourt, for the sole purpose of beholding her beloved young friend installed in her new residence. And true to her word, she came; and instead of "putting up," as usual, at the Spalding Arms at Mill-Hill, claimed a night's hospitality at Holywell.

The Duchess was in her usual unmeaning flurry of spirits; full of projects, insisting upon being permitted to engage a house for the Army-tages on her return to St. James's Square; but finding time to relate, with sarcastic liveliness, a thousand amusing anecdotes of the sudden inflation of Sir Leon's self-importance, his solemn sententiousness amid the airy lightness of the coteries, his overstrained politeness, his misplaced affability, and above all, his self-conceited blindness to the contempt with which his pretensions were regarded by the diplomatic representatives of his own country.

Before she quitted Holywell on the following morning, her Grace extorted a promise from Marian that they would pass a few days at Spalding Court, previously to the departure of the family for town. "I cannot, however, promise you anything very gay or very attractive," said she, kissing the forehead of her fair friend at parting.

"We should not at present feel inclined to

join the society of strangers," replied Marian, looking down on her mourning dress.

"A few Brighton friends, however, are coming to take a peep at our Yorkshire wilderness; and we are to have the Neapolitan Ambassador and his Secretary in a day or two, besides the young Lady Willoughby de Lechlade—an heiress and peeress in her own right—who would just suit me for Wildingham; which forces me to hurry home, that I may be in the way to present them to the Duke. You see I am, as usual, the most *affairée* of women, with the management of half the world upon my hands! Pity me,—love me,—and good-bye!"

But, on her Grace's arrival at home, she had the misery of finding that, for once, her authority was anticipated. The Duke of Spalding took an early opportunity of acquainting her that he had just given his consent to the union of his son, Lord Wildingham, with the ward of the Misses Maranham; and placed

at the same moment in her hands a letter from his friend the Duke of Witherby, announcing his approaching marriage with Lady Laura Greta.

The poor Duchess was struck, not only dumb but still, by this twofold catastrophe! On recovering her powers of speech and action, she showed some disposition to remonstrate against the *mésalliance* projected by her son. But, in this one instance, the Duke was firm. Unaccustomed to exercise his prerogative, he did not compromise his dignity by vacillation, when once his will had been made manifest. He had decreed that Rosamond Devonport *should* be Lady Wildingham of Wildingham, and Lady Wildingham of Wildingham she was to be!

"I do not often interfere with your family arrangements," said he; "still less allow myself to foment discussions, by offering you my advice. For once, however, permit me to become your counsellor. Wyndham is the first of our children to marry. He is of age,

independent in fortune, independent in mind. Do not oppose a choice sanctioned by his father; you will but exhibit yourself to the world in an attitude of defeat: since you must needs accept a daughter-in-law of my approval, accept her cheerfully, accept her courteously; and the people with whom you live and whose approbation you value, will never discover your disappointment."

But the Duchess *could* not, on such an occasion, be discreet. Dearly as she treasured the applause bestowed by society on her talents for management, she preferred appearing before it as a defeated general, rather than have it believed she could sanction such degradation on the part of her favourite son. To dispute with the Duke, whom it must have required a strong incitement to stir up to the exercise of his mental authority, she saw would be unavailing; but she wrote letters to all her friends, sent messages to all her acquaintance, and paid visits to all her neighbours, proclaiming herself the most injured and unhappy of

women; little dreaming that they, friendly souls, attributed her despair rather to the well-judged match of the Duke of Wetherby than to the ill-judged match of Lord Wildingham.

Having allowed her some days to consider the matter and rave out her displeasure, the Duke exacted, with the same mild dignity of demeanour, that she would pay a visit of ceremony to the Grange. But, alarmed by the sudden assumption of will and wilfulness on the part of her husband, against this concession she instantly and vehemently rebelled.

"As you will," was his calm reply. "In that case, my daughters will accompany me, to be presented to their new sister-in-law, and make arrangements for being present at the solemnization of their brother's marriage. Just as I find them disposed to evince their filial submission to me on this occasion, will be their chance of visiting London for the season; I have made up *my* mind to pass the spring at Spalding Court."

"Made up his mind!"—The Duchess was

overpowered by consternation. What might not occur next? To what indignity might she not be required to submit?

All she had recently said concerning the want of tact of Mrs. Armytage, in parading, like Belisarius, her wrongs and disgrace to the contemptuous pity of the world,—all the triumph she had herself betrayed on the fall of her rival queen,—recurred to her mind! Her affairs were not yet desperate. The Duke might soon get weary of the labours of life. She remembered how ably even Napoleon had been documented out of interference in the details of state affairs, by the tediousness of the memorials forced by Secretary Bourrienne on his attention; and resolved, like many an able general, to sham defeat,—*de réculer pour mieux sauter.* She could not renounce London—her occupation was *not* gone. She had still two daughters to marry, —a borough to manœuvre,—Sir Leon to finesse,—and a Secretary of State and a Bishop to dun for the payment of the parlia-

mentary interest expended to secure their own promotion!

She accordingly smiled her sweetest and most mechanical of drawing-room smiles upon the Duke, and set forth, in full state and full submission, on a congratulatory visit to the Grange.

CHAPTER XXII.

Who visits me besides the winds of heaven?
Who seeketh me but the sad sighing breeze
That bringeth to my ear familiar tones
Of voices silenced now, and friends long dead?

JOANNA BAILLIE.

TWELVE months had elapsed from the period so eventful to the little circle we have been describing; bringing with them the usual alternation of shade and sunshine, pleasures and pains. Dr. Grant was now the rich rector of Thoroton, having delegated to an able curate all the emoluments and half the care of the little vicarage of Holywell, over which he still yearned, as with the tenderness of a father. Marian was the happy mother of a son and heir; and the Duchess of Wetherby of a daughter, already consecrated to the memory of early friendship, by the name of Sophia. Thoroton,

proud to learn that its young member (having rejected a peerage tendered through the medium of Lord Armytage) still clung to its representation, the duties of which he had during the intervening session ably discharged, — frowned upon Gumption for his sake, and accepted with thankfulness the munificence of its member ;—Mill Hill, abandoned by the mortified Wemmersley, was tenanted by the worthy and well-informed ex-mayor of the borough ;—the family at Maudsley Hall were fermenting over certain newspaper reports, that Reginald the Sapient had "given his hand at Aix-la-Chapelle to the widow of a Jewish banker, M. le Baron von Periwinkel,— a lady formerly better known to the public as the celebrated Mademoiselle Anatoline, of the Académie Royale at Paris !" Cheered and enlivened by a younger circle, Holywell Park seemed to have lost all its cold formality; while Arthur and his wife, in the congenial society of the Wetherbys and Wildinghams, and the frequent holiday visits of Lords Ar-

mytage and Greta, did not forget the claims of the happy-hearted Baltimores and Robseys, thrice happy in witnessing the happiness of their darling Marian.

Nevertheless upon *her* happiness there existed a drawback. She was now enabled, it is true, to contribute to the education of her sisters, and assign to the use of her brothers the portion bestowed upon herself by little Jacob;—she had the satisfaction of seeing her mother pass her Midsummer days in the midst of her children among the roses and strawberry beds of Holywell, and of conveying her father in triumph to the annual ovation of the St. Leger. Dyke Robsey had realized an additional thousand or two per annum by his rail-road speculations; even Jack had prospered—having disposed of a patent for a waterproof harness-varnish of his own invention, for some thousands of pounds;—while Lord Armytage had procured a cadetship at Woolwich for little Bob, and Parson Longodds bequeathed the savings of his living and his

betting-book to his godson, little Dick. Yet amid all these triumphs Marian found a thorn lurking amid her crown of roses!

Mrs. Armytage was still abroad—and apparently still resentful. The letters addressed to her at her banker's during the first months of her absence, had been uniformly returned unopened; and it was now some time since the slightest intercourse had taken place between her and her English friends. That she was labouring under an agonizing and fatal disease, never entered into their surmises; so secret had been her measures at the period of undergoing the operation at Paris, the success of which had for a time inspired her with hopes of recovery. They knew that she had been travelling in France, Germany, Italy;—and the assumed cheerfulness with which she was careful to greet those English friends with whom chance brought her into contact on her route, had effectually deceived the world;—they saw her amused,—believed her happy,—

and reported of her, on their return to England, as pleased and profiting by her travels.

There existed not, however, throughout Europe, a woman more profoundly miserable than Mrs. Armytage! Broken in health, broken in heart,—repentant, yet ashamed to show her repentance,—unhappy, yet, above all things, careful to disguise her wretchedness!

And yet, though the demon of Pride lingered around the ruin he had made, pointing out with his skinny finger to her apprehensions the contumely of the world, lest happier influences should obtain the ascendancy, be it not supposed that the chastening hand of Heaven had passed so heavily over her head without producing *some* degree of amendment! She had become at least aware of her personal insignificance. She who, with her throne established at Holywell, had bidden "kings come and bow to it,"—who had rejected the overtures of ministers as beneath her notice,—evaded the travelling visit of a Prince of the

Blood,—and bandied scorn for scorn with the Duchess of Spalding;—she who, from her sprinkling of economical and agricultural knowledge,—her familiarity with Blackstone, and her power to detect the shallow knaveries of Messrs. Pennett and Nebwell, fancied herself skilled to sway the helm of kingdoms, and essential to the peace and prosperity of the county of York,—she, in short, who looked upon Mrs. Armytage of Holywell as a portion of the state,—had at length been taught to know herself a speck in the creation,—a worm in the sight of Him before whom kings on their thrones are "altogether vanity."

She had traversed many countries,—countries where not only her name and quality, but even her very language, was a blank. She spoke indifferent French; was unskilled to bend to the usance of foreign lands, and ungifted with that winning courtesy of manner which reconciles all discrepancies and supplies all deficiencies of speech. The people among whom her wanderings were directed, saw in

her only a sickly, hard-favoured, sore-to-please old woman,—travelling with a maid and a courier;—not even a "Miladi!" The very servants by whom she was accompanied, and whom she had hired at Paris, knew nothing of her former days of empire, and could announce no wonders in her honour; and the "*vieille dame seule, en deuil,*" was often thrust into the "worst inn's worst room",—without ceremony and without apology.

On some occasion, when subjected to one of those gross extortions which the much-enduring English discover, after much endurance, to be no longer endurable, she referred herself with indignation to the redress of a local tribunal. But alas! Burn and Blackstone were no longer available in her cause; and Mrs. Armytage, the once mighty Mrs. Armytage, found herself compelled to wait among the commonalty;—to be saucily cross-examined,—boldly out-sworn,—insolently reproved;—condemned to payment, and dismissed with costs; while attendant notaries sneered, and the

rabble hooted in her dishonour! — Her very menials grew ashamed of a mistress, who would not submit to be cheated, as became a woman of condition!

But it was not alone by the insolence of the vulgar she stood reproved; it was by her own nothingness compared with the wise institutions and social advancement of the countries which through life she had presumed to disparage. She, who had been accustomed to fancy that the sun shone more favouringly at Holywell than elsewhere, and had presumed to tax the carelessness of Providence, when her harvests suffered from mildew, or her flocks and herds from disease,—now beheld rising cities, the very names of which were unfamiliar to her ear,—sage communities,—liberal foundations, — to which the puny establishments wherein she had vested her pride were as nutshells on the ocean. She signified her approval,—she avowed her admiration;—and no one cared:—her very opinion was a matter of indifference! The Hospital she commended

had existed for four hundred years, unconscious of the being of the Maudsleys of Domesday Book,—and the brotherhood of St. Bernard, and the ploughs of Hofwyl, had laboured diligently in their vocation, whether Doncaster races came to Mrs. Armytage of Holywell,—or Mrs. Armytage of Holywell went to Doncaster races! The sparrow on the house-top seemed of more account than herself, to those among whom its nest was appointed.

At length, the aggravation of uneradicable disease gave evidence that the anguish and peril she had undergone, had been borne in vain. Once more the latent disorder put forth its agonizing throes. She could travel no further: she sought a home—a home in which to suffer—in which to die! It was by the side of the Arno she set up her rest—that poetically-sounding river, which seems to breathe of shepherds, muses, and zephyrs; but where the rain rains so heavily, and the spring breezes blow so bleakly. Her villa, bare and comfortless, like all Italian villas, was ill calcu-

lated for the chilly season in which she chose it for her habitation. She had no servants but foreign servants—no books but foreign books: she had not so much as foreign companions—foreign friends—for these she rejected. A miserably disease was devouring her!—Yet, with all this, she was only subjected to the common lot of humanity—the visitations with which, for his own great purposes, GOD is pleased to visit the creatures of his hand. The peculiar humiliation lay in herself: that heretofore she had presumed to hold herself exempted from the vulgar destiny of mankind.

And now, "by foreign hands," her dying limbs "must be composed;" strangers must stand impatient by her bed-side; her very dust must return to the dust of strange and, as *she* deemed it, unhallowed ground. The adored Caroline of the old Squire and the fond Arthur—the revered mistress of Hardywood and Simmons—the patroness of schools and almshouses—the benefactress of hospitals and

asylums—the great Mrs. Armytage of Holywell Park—must lie unnoticed and forgotten in the weedy corner of a Tuscan burying-ground! for behold! Providence had blessed her with two children to fulfil the customary duty of mourning over the grave of their mother:—the one had been dismissed from her affection by the mandate of her imperious temper—the other cut off, in the prime of youth and loveliness, by her perversity!

Had not the sufferer cause for mourning?—Had she not cause for despondency?—Might it not be inferred—might it not be hoped—that the tears which now, for the first time, began to steal down her cheeks, were tears of repentance—of penitence? For lo! *She was about to die, and felt that she had lived in vain!*

The servants who attended her, weary of their monotonous life, were constantly protesting that nothing ailed her but *ennui*—that she ought to remove into Florence for advice, if not for amusement. But Mrs. Armytage

persisted in refusing to move: she knew that, amid the stir and tumult of a city—amid the throng of unknown faces—she should feel still more desolately alone. Even the peasants, who occasionally found themselves in her presence while serving the villa with the produce of their farms or gardens, ventured to accost her with the expression of their wonder and pity that she should lead so solitary a life; and the children, with an inquiry, whether in her own country she had neither friends nor relatives?—For conventional distinctions are otherwise kept up on the Continent than in our own aristocratic frame of society; and man meets man as if the same heaven shone over the heads—the same earth sustained the steps of one and all; and little Josephine the milk-maid could discern no thunderbolts in the hand of the once puissant Mrs. Armytage, in whose presence the two thousand heads and knees of the tenants of Holywell had been wont to bow down and worship.

Often would the miserable woman sit in her

ill-closed window, watching the still desolate valley of the Arno, and wondering when the trees would bud, and the verdure spring anew; "for then," she thought, "I shall be at rest!" Dreary as was the scene, it was more cheering to her feelings than the presence of strange multitudes;—she had more sympathy with the trees and pastures than with uncleanly bigots, who knew not her language; and the song of birds and bleating of flocks seemed congenial to the ear that listened in vain for the sound of a familiar voice—for a word of kindness and endearment! But she had learned at length to say, when contemplating the greatness of her punishment—"I have deserved it all!" The right spirit was dawning within her;—even Dr. Grant might have rejoiced, with tears, over his patroness, as over the one sinner that repenteth!

One evening, after having pursued for hours her dreary meditations, by the light of the melancholy tapers that scarcely served to define the dimensions of her vast saloon, Mrs.

Armytage was preparing to retire to the feverish pillow, which pain rendered a pillow of thorns, when she was startled by a sudden tumult in the portico of the villa; and the insinuations of the neighbouring farmers, that her solitary abode would one night or other be attacked by one of the "bands" roving about the country, suddenly rushed into her mind. The clamour and altercation in the vestibule increased; till at length, starting from her chair, she stood with a beating heart to abide the issue. "After all, then," murmured she, "I am reserved for a violent death!—With a mortal disease consuming me, I must fall a victim to assassination!" And she shuddered at the thought of all she might still be called upon to bear, ere laid at rest for ever,—when the door of her chamber was flung open: she beheld dark figures enter the room; and involuntarily closed her eyes, that she might meet her doom without shrinking.

With hasty steps, the intruders traversed the floor, and approached her; while, over-

come by weakness, she sank into a chair under the expectation of an assailing arm—perhaps a mortal blow! A single humble and heart-felt ejaculation to Heaven avowed her apprehensions and her resignation.

But the arm that encircled her was no hostile arm—the sobs that reached her ear burst from no alien bosom. It was her son—her afflicted son—who was hanging over her! It was Marian who was kneeling at her feet!

"Will you receive us?—Will you accept us?"—faltered Arthur, again embracing her.

A kiss imprinted upon his clasped hands, and the burning tears that fell upon them, silently avouched the repentance and the renewed affections of his mother!

CHAPTER XXIII.

O terror! what hath she perceived? O Joy!
What doth she look on? Whom doth she behold?

WORDSWORTH.

IT was with some difficulty that Mrs. Armytage could persuade herself, as she sat at breakfast between her two children, the following morning, that all this happiness was not a dream; that they had really quitted their cheerful home,—their friendly neighbourhood,—their beautiful children,—to minister to her comfort. The mystery of the sudden arrival was readily explained. An English surgeon, summoned from Florence to attend her in a painful crisis of her disorder, had accidentally related her melancholy and precarious situation to the Ambassador, to whose household he was attached; who, being a kind-hearted and con-

scientious man, had judged it right to communicate to Lord Armytage, with whom he was intimately acquainted, the lamentable position of his kinswoman.

The result may easily be inferred. From Lord Armytage the sad intelligence went straight to Arthur; and a few hours' consideration sufficed to determine his wife to quit all for his sake, and accompany him on his pilgrimage of duty to Italy. They took with them the most eminent surgical practitioner whom money would induce to quit England on such an errand; scarcely slept on their road; and reached Florence, almost in reply to the letter of Lord B.

Even flushed as it was by pleasurable emotions, Arthur could scarcely refrain from tears as he gazed upon the altered countenance of his mother. He had not supposed that disease could work such a change on any living frame. Her dark hair was now silvered to a snowy whiteness; deep furrows seamed her cheeks; her eyes had attained a ghastly and unnatural

expression; twenty years appeared to have passed over her head! He could no longer doubt that she had reached the last stage of mortal existence.

"I see you are afraid to talk to me of Holywell," said she to her son, in her now mild and enfeebled voice, after having exhausted her inquiries touching their common friends, common county, common country. "But do not spare me. I must not be humoured as I used to be of old. Nay, romantic as you may consider the project, it is my intention to accompany you home,—to die where my father died,—and be buried where my husband and my child are buried. I know, though you are too kind to tell it me, that the leave of absence you have obtained from your parliamentary duties, on whatever pretext, can be but short. We must not part again, my son! and if the adviser you have brought me will assure us that at least I shall not distress you by dying on the road," (a melancholy smile broke over

her features as she spoke,) "the sooner we set out for England, the better."

"Do you think you shall be able to support the fatigue of such a journey?" faltered Arthur.

"Do you think you will be able to bear the ordeal of a return to Holywell?" added Marian, in a still lower voice.

"Till I have surmounted *that* trial," replied Mrs. Armytage, more gravely, "I have done nothing! I know that it is good for me to have been afflicted; but my chastisements have been death from above; a *voluntary* expiation is still owing. I must do penance for my former faults. I must make it seen of men, as I feel it in my heart of hearts, that my pride is humbled to the dust. Do not interrupt me; I need no soothing of the soul, again to mislead me into error. Let me bear my cross in all patience and humility; and let it be my reward that my eyes are closed by the hands of those I love, and that I shall not moulder into nothingness in unkindred dust."

Nor could Mrs. Armytage be said to swerve a single moment from her regenerated frame of spirit. Amid her most grievous pangs, she never murmured; amid all the contrarieties of her homeward journey, she uttered not a single cry of impatience. She was now as fortified in good as once in evil. The idea of beholding her grandchildren was very cheering to her; and, as they drew near England, and at length, near Holywell, not even Marian was more excited by the prospect of their family re-union than the dying woman. "Do not suspect me without reason," said she to Arthur, when, for an instant, he ventured to jest with her on her grandmotherly tenderness: "it is *not* the heir of Holywell Park, on whom I am anxious to bestow my blessing before I die. It is on little Arthur—the son of Arthur—the grandson of my own Arthur." And her son was silenced in a moment.

Marian, however, when they drew near, *very* near home,—the scene of all her former disagreements with her mother-in-law—began to

tremble as she called to mind every little alteration effected since her departure; every innovation, every change; a room new furnished—a parterre introduced—a plantation cleared away; she knew that Mrs. Armytage professed the opinion of Pope who "could not bear that a post should be grubbed up which he remembered in his boyhood:" and an old tree or two which had been felled for the benefit of the prospect, now rose up in judgment before her! But these apprehensions were soon relieved by the presence of mind of Mrs. Armytage.

"I have prepared myself to find many changes which must have appeared essential to a taste less bigoted than my own," said she, as they approached Thoroton. "But remember that no transformation I can find at Holywell is half so strange or so complete, as that which has taken place within my own mind."

She herself, however, had scarcely calculated upon the effect likely to be produced on her feelings, by the first aspect of her former

residence. It was night when they arrived; for Arthur had so timed the journey, in order to spare her the view of Holywell church, with all its sad associations, as well as to avoid the inquisitive glances of the villagers; and Marian accompanied her at once to her own room—her own former room—in which not the slightest change had been effected since her departure: even a few personal trifles which she had left lying about, had been religiously retained in their places!

"May Heaven bless you, my daughter!" was the solemn ejaculation of Mrs. Armytage, overcome with pain, fatigue, and emotion, on finding that her ancient attendants had been sent for, and their services secured to her. "This one night, and to-morrow, I would fain give to solitude and reflection. Leave me alone with myself and God!—On the day following, I will see your babes; afterwards my excellent friend, Dr. Grant,—the Rotherhams,—the Maranhams, — whom you will.

To-morrow, my dear Marian, I must be alone!"

On emerging from the retreat thus allotted to herself, all trace of agitation was effaced,—all emotion subdued:—Mrs. Armytage had wrestled with the evil spirit for the last time, and been triumphant. Thenceforward her demeanor was mild,—her voice equable,—save when the anguish of disease depressed it to a faltering whisper. Dr. Grant came; and, though tears rolled silently down his cheeks on marking the cruel change which pain and sorrow had wrought in the appearance of his early patroness, his heart soon glowed with satisfaction on perceiving that the good seed which the Almighty had sowed in that steril earth, was at length bringing forth fruit; that, as it approached towards eternity, a brighter light had descended upon her soul. Never had he loved or reverenced her half so much, when in former days she dealt forth benefits to him and his, as now, when, fallen in fortunes and

dispirited by disease, she rose superior to her destinies, sustained by reliance on the infinite goodness of GOD.

For days,—for weeks,—for months,—she lingered, struggling with torment,—struggling with the tenacity of life, which even torment fails to extinguish. Arthur, compelled to leave her for a time, in order to fulfil his duties in Parliament, found her yet alive on his return at the close of the session; thanking Heaven that she was permitted to hold him once more in her arms before she departed hence to be no more seen. Fain would she have prevented her daughter-in-law, from persisting in an attendance upon her sick room, which now presented a fearful and revolting spectacle. But Marian would not be denied. As well might Naomi have rejected the tender services of Ruth, as Mrs. Armytage those of the faithful wife of her son.

"And this is the daughter whom I presumed to despise, whom I presumed to reject!" mur-

mured she to Dr. Grant, when Marian, kneeling at her feet, was serving her with almost menial humility; then, laying her hand solemnly upon the young fair head that concealed itself in the folds of her robe, on hearing this tender adjuration, she bestowed a heartfelt benediction on her angelic attendant. "Who would have done for me what *she* has done?" persisted Mrs. Armytage, in a broken voice. "*Who* would have forgiven me, *who* would have comforted me, who would have smoothed my pathway to the grave? Doctor! I commend to your love and care this second Sophia; more happy than the first, to have escaped the evil influence of my jealous pride. Love her, my dear friend, as I do; and value her as she deserves to be valued."

In these happy dispositions, her last days, her last breath, passed away. Fearful were her sufferings. Her best friends scarcely desired the prorogation of her miserable existence; and, when all was over, they could rejoice with

exceeding joy, that she had expired in so peaceful a frame of mind,—in charity with all men, and all men in charity with *her*!

* * * * *

But the remembrance of every painful scene connected with these events, has now in a great measure subsided at Holywell. There is not a happier pair or happier parents in the county of York, than Arthur Armytage and his wife; the Wildinghams and Wetherbys are frequently their hosts, frequently their guests; Rainsford, in some degree reconciled to his lot, has brought his pretty wife to profit by their example; and the Rotherham family have lately noticed with satisfaction that Lord Greta appears to be attaching himself to Mary Grant, whose worthy father, thanks to Lord Armytage, is now a very venerable—and *truly* a very venerable—Archdeacon. The Duchess of Wetherby rejoices in the prospect of having the favourite pupil of Sophia Armytage for a sister-in-law; and there is luckily not even a Mr. Wemmersley in the neighbour-

hood of Thoroton to cavil at the disparity of the connexion.

Margaret Maranham, mild and retiring as ever, but improved in health and spirits, resides in a cheerful cottage adjoining the grounds of Wildingham Abbey, where Rosamond's lovely children are her daily visitors. Their Duchess-grandmother has neither time nor attention to bestow on them; her leisure being engrossed with expatiating on the folly of Lady Amabel, who, having eloped last year with Lord Edward Brereton, has just now the happiness of sharing his barrack-room in the Regent's Park; and the madness of Lady Honoria, who has declared to her family an intention of bestowing herself upon a converted converter of the Jews, in order to go pilgrimizing with him into the Holy Land. The scandalous chronicle asserts, moreover, that (Mr. Quin having died suddenly at Paris, where Lord Downham happened to be passing the Easter vacation,) Lady Arabella has made good certain former

claims upon his Lordship's hand and Marquisate. But the rumour wants confirmation.

Sir Leon Marscourt, meanwhile, in order to distinguish himself from all possible Marscourts, has been impowered by the Herald's Office to add the prefix of Fitz to his new name; and Sir Leon and the Hon. Lady Fitz-Marscourt of Counterfield Lodge, are entertaining Highnesses Royal and Serene, Landgraves and Margravines, Comtes and Chevaliers, at their princely mansion in Belgrave Square,—all "tarnation grand."

But it is a happy *home*-circle that graces the hospitality of Holywell! The Baltimores and Robseys esteem it the Eden of the United Kingdom; the rich applaud its sayings and doings; the poor throng in cheerful confidence to its gates; all uniting to bless the now-popular name of Mrs. Armytage

THE END.

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